

ARTHUR O'LEARY.

VOL. II.

MR. LEVER'S WORKS.

1. TOM BURKE OF OURS. Vol. I., 24 Etchings, 13s. cloth. Continued in monthly Numbers, 1s. each.
2. JACK HINTON, THE GUARDSMAN. With a Portrait, and numerous Illustrations, 14s. cloth.
3. CHARLES O'MALLEY, THE IRISH DRAGOON. 2 Vols. with numerous Illustrations, 24s. cloth.
4. CONFESSIONS OF HARRY LORREQUER. With Illustrations, 12s. cloth.

DUBLIN: WILLIAM CURRY, JUN., AND CO.

LONDON: WILLIAM S. ORR AND CO.

ARTHUR O'LEARY:
HIS WANDERINGS AND PONDERINGS
IN
MANY LANDS.

EDITED BY
HIS FRIEND, HARRY LORREQUER.

AND
ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE CRUIKSHANK.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET

1844.

LONDON
HARRISON AND CO., PRINTERS,
ST. MARTIN'S LANE.



ARTHUR O'LEARY.

CHAPTER X.

A SOUVENIR OF "THE FRANCE."

It was in the month of May—I won't confess to the year—that I found myself, after trying various hotels in the Place Royale, at last deposited at the door of the Hotel de France. It seemed to me in my then ignorance, like a *pis aller*, when the postillion said, "Let us try The France;" and little prepared me for the handsome, but somewhat small hotel, before me. It was nearly five o'clock when I arrived, and I had only time to make some slight change in my dress, when the bell sounded for *table d'hôte*.

The guests were already seated when I entered,

but a place had been reserved for me, which completed the table. I was a young—perhaps after reading a little farther you'll say a "*very young*" traveller at the time, but was soon struck by the quiet and decorous style in which the dinner was conducted: the servants were prompt, silent, and observant; the guests easy and affable; the equipage of the table was even elegant; and the cookery, Biennai's. I was the only Englishman present, the party seemingly made up of Germans and French; but all spoke together like acquaintances, and before the dinner had proceeded far, were polite enough to include me in the conversation.

At the head, sat a large and strikingly handsome man, of about eight and thirty or forty years of age; his dress a dark frock, richly braided, and ornamented by the decorations of several foreign orders; his forehead was high and narrow, the temples strongly indented; his nose arched and thin, and his upper lip covered by a short black moustache raised at either extremity, and slightly curled, as we see occasionally in a Vandyk picture; indeed, his dark brown features,

somewhat sad in their expression, his rich hazel eyes and long waving hair, gave him all the character that great artist loved to perpetuate on his canvas ; he spoke seldom, but when he did, there was something indescribably pleasing in the low, mellow tones of his voice ; a slight smile too lit up his features at these times, and his manner had in it—I know not what—some strange power it seemed, that made whoever he addressed feel pleased and flattered by his notice of them, just as we see a few words spoken by a sovereign, caught up and dwelt upon by those around.

At his side sat a lady, of whom when I first came into the room I took little notice. Her features seemed pleasing, but no more ; but gradually, as I watched her, I was struck by the singular delicacy of traits that rarely make their impression at first sight. She was about twenty-five, perhaps twenty-six, but of a character of looks that preserves something almost childish in their beauty. She was pale, and with brown hair—that light sunny brown that varies in its hue with every degree of light upon it ; her face oval and inclined to plumpness ; her eyes large, full,

and lustrous, with an expression of softness and candour, that won on you wonderfully the longer you looked at them; her nose was short, perhaps faultily so, but beautifully chiselled, and fine as a Greek statue; her mouth, rather large, displayed, however, two rows of teeth beautifully regular, and of snowy whiteness; while her chin, rounded and dimpled, glided by an easy transition into a throat large and most gracefully formed. Her figure, as well as I could judge, was below the middle size, and inclined to *embonpoint*; and her dress, denoting some national peculiarity of which I was ignorant, was a velvet boddice laced in front and ornamented with small silver buttons, which terminated in a white muslin skirt; a small cap, something like what Mary Queen of Scots is usually represented in, sat on the back of her head and fell in deep lace folds on her shoulders. Lastly, her hands were small, white, and dimpled, and displayed on her taper and rounded fingers several rings of apparently great value.

I have been somewhat lengthy in my description of these two persons, and can scarcely ask

my reader to accompany me round the circle ; however, it is with them principally I have to do. The others at table were still remarkable enough : there was a leading member of the chamber of deputies—an ex-minister, a tall, dark-browed, ill-favoured man, with a retiring forehead and coal black eyes ; he was a man of great cleverness, spoke eloquently and well, and singularly open and frank in giving his opinion on the politics of the time. There was a German or two, from the grand-duchy of something, somewhat proud, reserved personages, as all the Germans of petty states are ; they talked little, and were evidently impressed with the power they possessed of tantalizing the company, by not divulging the intention of the “Gross Herzog of Hoch Donnerstadt” regarding the present prospects of Europe.

There were three Frenchmen and two French ladies, all pleasant, easy, and conversable people ; there was a doctor from Louvain, a shrewd intelligent man ; a Prussian major and his wife, well-bred, quiet people, and like all Prussians, polite without inviting acquaintance ; an Austrian secre-

tary of legation; a wine merchant from Bourdeaux; and a celebrated pianist completed the party.

I have now put my readers in possession of information which I only obtained after some days myself; for though one or other of these personages as occasionally absent from *table d'hôte*, I soon perceived that they were all frequenters of the house, and well known there.

If the guests were seated at table wherever chance or accident might place them, I could perceive that a tone of deference was always used to the tall man, who invariably maintained his place at the head; and an air of even greater courtesy assumed towards the lady beside him, who was his wife. He was always addressed as Monsieur le Comte, and her title of Countess never forgotten in speaking to her. During dinner, whatever little chit-chat or gossip was the talk of the day, was specially offered up to her.

The younger guests occasionally ventured to present a bouquet, and even the rugged minister himself, accomplished a more polite bow in accosting her, than he could have summoned up

for his presentation to royalty. To all these little attentions she returned a smile, or a look, or a word, or a gesture with her white hand, never exciting jealousy by any undue degree of favour, and distributing her honours with the practised equanimity of one accustomed to it.

Dinner over and coffee, a handsome britzka, drawn by two splendid dark bay horses, would drive up, and Madame la Comtesse, conducted to the carriage by her husband, would receive the homage of the whole party, as they stood to let her pass. The count would then linger some twenty minutes or so, and take his leave, to wander for an hour about the park, and afterwards to the theatre, where I used to see him in a private box with his wife.

Such was the little party at "The France" when I took up my residence there in the month of May, and gradually one dropped off after another as the summer wore on. The Germans went back to "sauer kraut" and "kreutzer" whist; the secretary of legation was on leave; the wine merchant was off to St. Petersburg; the pianist was performing in London; the ex-minister was made a clerk in the

bureau he once directed; and so on, leaving our party reduced to the count and madame, a stray traveller, a deaf abbé, and myself.

The dog days in a continental city are, every one knows, stupid and tiresome enough. Every one has taken his departure either to his chateau, if he has one, or to the watering places; the theatre has no attraction, even if the heat permitted one to visit it; the streets are empty, parched, and grass-grown; and except the arrival and departure of that incessant locomotive, John Bull, there is no bustle or stir any where.

Hapless indeed, is the condition then, of the man who is condemned from any accident to toil through this dreary season; to wander about in solitude the places he has seen filled by pleasant company; to behold the park and promenades, given up to Flemish *bonnes*, or Norman nurses, where he was wont to glad his eye with the sight of bright eyes and trim shapes, flitting past in all the tasty elegance of Parisian toilette; to see the lazy *frotteur* sleeping away his hours at the *porte-cochère*, which, a month before, thundered with the deep roll of equipage coming and

going—all this is very sad, and disposes one to become dull and discontented too.

For what reason I was detained at Brussels it is unnecessary to inquire: some delay in remittances, if I remember aright, had their share in the cause. Who ever travelled without having cursed his banker, or his agent, or his uncle, or his guardian, or somebody in short, who, had a deal of money belonging to him in his hands, and would not send it forward? In all my long experience of travelling, and travellers, I don't remember meeting with one person who, if it were not for such mischances, would not have been amply supplied with cash. Some with a knowing wink, throw the blame on the "Governor;" others, more openly indignant, confound Coutts and Drummond; a stray Irishman will now and then damn the "tenantry that haven't paid up the last November;" but none, no matter how much their condition bespeaks that out-o'-elbows habit which a "ways-and-means" style of life contracts, will ever confess to the fact that their expectations are as blank as their banker's book, and that the only land they are ever to pretend to, is a post-

obit right in some six feet by two in a churchyard. And yet the world is full of such people—well-informed, pleasant, good-looking folk, who inhabit first-rate hotels—drink, dine, and dress well—frequent theatres and promenades—spend their winters at Paris, Florence, or Rome—their summers at Baden, Ems, or Interlachen; have a strange half intimacy with men in the higher circles; occasionally dine with them; are never heard of in any dubious or unsafe affair; are reputed safe fellows to talk to: know every one—from the horse-dealer who will give credit, to the Jew who will advance cash; and notwithstanding that they neither gamble, nor bet, nor speculate, yet contrive to live—ay, and well too—without any known resources whatever. If English—and they are for the most part so—they usually are called by some well-known name of aristocratic reputation in England: they are thus, Villiers, or Paget, or Seymour, or Percy, which on the Continent is already a kind of half nobility at once; and the question which seemingly needs no reply—*Ah, vous êtes parent de mi lord!* is a receipt in full for rank any where.

These men—and who that knows anything of the Continent has not met such everywhere?—are the great riddles of our century; and I'd rather give a reward for their secret, than all the discoveries about perpetual motion, or longitude, or St. John Longism that ever was heard of; and strange it is too, no one has ever blabbed. Some have emerged from this misty state to inherit large fortunes and live in the best style; yet I have never heard tell of a single man having turned king's evidence on his fellows. And yet what a talent theirs must be, let any man confess who has waited three posts for a remittance without any tidings of its arrival; think of the hundred and one petty annoyances and ironies to which he is subject: he fancies that the very waiters know he is "*à sec*;" that the landlord looks sour, and the landlady austere; the very clerk in the post-office appears to say "No letter for you, sir," with a jibing and impertinent tone. From that moment, too, a dozen expensive tastes that he never dreamed of before, enter his head: he wants to purchase a hack, or give a dinner party, or bet at a race course, principally because he has not got a

sous in his pocket, and he is afraid it may be guessed by others; such is the fatal tendency to strive or pretend to something, which has no other value in our eyes than the effect it may have on our acquaintances, regardless of what sacrifices it may demand the exercise.

Forgive, I pray, this long digression, which although, I hope, not without its advantages, should scarcely have been entered into were it not *à-propos* to myself: and to go back—I began to feel excessively uncomfortable at the delay of my money. My first care every morning was to repair to the post-office; sometimes I arrived before it was open, and had to promenade up and down the gloomy “Rue de l’Eveque” till the clock struck; sometimes the mail would be late—a foreign mail is generally late when the weather is peculiarly fine and the roads good—but always the same answer came—“*Rien pour vous, Monsieur O’Leary;*” and at last I imagined from the way the fellow spoke, that he had set the response to a tune, and sang it.

Beranger has celebrated in one of his very prettiest lyrics “how happy one is at twenty in a

garret.” I have no doubt, for my part, that the vicinity of the slates and the poverty of the apartment, would have much contributed to my peace of mind at the time I speak of. The fact of a magnificently-furnished *salon*, a splendid dinner every day, champagne and Seltzer promiscuously, cab fares, and theatre tickets innumerable, being all scored against me, were sad dampers to my happiness! and from being one of the cheeriest and most light-hearted of fellows, I sank into a state of fidgety and restless impatience, the nearest thing, I ever remember, to low spirits.

Such was I one day when the post, which I had been watching anxiously from mid-day, had not arrived at five o'clock. Leaving word with the commissionaire, to wait and report to me at the hotel, I turned back to the *table d'hôte*. By accident, the only guests where the count and madame; there they were, as accurately dressed as ever; so handsome and so happy-looking; so attached, too, in their manner towards each other—that nice balance between affection and courtesy, which before the world is so captivating. Disturbed as were my thoughts, I could

not help feeling struck by their bright and pleasant looks.

“Ah, a family party!” said the count gaily, as I entered, while madame bestowed on me one of her very sweetest smiles.

The restraint of strangers removed, they spoke as if I had been an old friend—chatting away about everything and everybody, in a tone of frank and easy confidence, perfectly delightful; occasionally deigning to ask if I did not agree with them in their opinions, and seeming to enjoy the little I ventured to say, with a pleasure I felt to be most flattering.

The count's quiet and refined manner—the easy flow of his conversation, replete as it was with information and amusement, formed a most happy contrast with the brilliant sparkle of madame's lively sallies; for she seemed rather disposed to indulge a vein of slight satire, but so tempered with good feeling and kindness withal, that you would not for the world forego the pleasure it afforded. Long—long before the dessert appeared, I ceased to think of my letter or my money, and did not remember that such things

as bankers, agents, or stockbrokers, were in the universe. Apparently they had been great travellers; had seen every city in Europe, and visited every court; knew all the most distinguished people, and many of the sovereigns intimately; and little stories of Metternich, *bon mots* of Talleyrand, anecdotes of Goëthe and Chateaubriand, seasoned the conversation with an interest, which to a young man like myself was all engrossing. Suddenly the door opened, and the commissionaire called out—"No letter for Monsieur O'Leary." I suddenly became pale and faint; and though the count was too well bred to take any direct notice of what he saw was caused by my disappointment, he contrived adroitly to direct some observation to madame, which relieved me from any burden of the conversation.

"What hour did you order the carriage, Duischka?" said he.

"At half-past six. The forest is so cool, that I like to go slowly through it."

"That will give us ample time for a walk, too," said he: "and if Monsieur O'Leary will join us, the pleasure will be all the greater."

I hesitated, and stammered out an apology about a head-ache, or something of the sort.

“The drive will be the best thing in the world for you,” said Madame; “and the strawberries and cream of Boitsfort will complete the cure.”

“Yes, yes,” said the count, as I shook my head half-sadly—“La comtesse is infallible as a doctor.”

“And, like all the faculty, very angry when her skill is called in question,” said she.

“Go then, and find your shawl, madame,” said he, “and, meanwhile, monsieur and I will discuss our liqueur, and be ready for you.”

Madame smiled gaily, as if having carried her point, and left the room.

The door was scarcely closed, when the count drew his chair closer to mine, and, with a look of kindness and good nature I cannot convey, said:—“I am going, Monsieur O’Leary, to take a liberty—a very great liberty indeed—with you, and perhaps you may not forgive it.” He paused for a minute or two, as if waiting some intimation on my part. I merely muttered something intended to express my willingness to accept of what he

hinted, and he resumed. "You are a very young man; I not a very old, but a very experienced one. There are occasions in life, in which such knowledge as I possess of the world and its ways, may be of great service. Now, without for an instant obtruding myself on your confidence, or inquiring into affairs which are strictly your own, I wish to say, that my advice and counsel, if you need either, are completely at your service. A few minutes ago I perceived that you were distressed at hearing there was no letter for you—"

"I know not how to thank you," said I, "for such kindness as this; and the best proof of my sincerity is, to tell you the position in which I am placed."

"One word first," added he, laying his hand gently on my arm—"one word. Do you promise to accept of my advice and assistance when you have revealed the circumstance you allude to? If not, I beg I may not hear it."

"Your advice I am most anxious for," said I hastily.

"The other was an awkward word, and I see that your delicacy has taken the alarm. But

come, it is spoken now, and can't be recalled. I must have my way: so go on."

I seized his hand with enthusiasm, and shook it heartily. "Yes," said I, "you shall have your way. I have neither shame nor concealment before you." And then, in as few words as I could explain such tangled and knotted webs as envelope all matters where legacies, and lawyers, and settlements, and securities, and mortgages enter, I put him in possession of the fact, that I had come abroad with the assurance from my man of business of a handsome yearly income, to be increased, after a time, to something very considerable; that I was now two months in expectation of remittances, which certain forms in Chancery had delayed and deferred; and that I watched the post each day with an anxious heart, for means to relieve me from certain trifling debts I had incurred, and enable me to proceed on my journey.

The count listened with the most patient attention to my story, only interfering once or twice, when some difficulty demanded explanation, and then suffering me to proceed to the end; when,

leisurely withdrawing a pocket-book from the breast of his frock, he opened it slowly. "My dear young friend," said he, in a measured and almost solemn tone, "every hour that a man is in debt, is a year spent in slavery. Your creditor is your master: it matters not whether a kind or a severe one, the sense of obligation you incur, saps the feeling of manly independence which is the first charm of youth; and, believe me, it is always through the rents in moral feeling that our happiness oozes out quickest. Here are five thousand francs; take as much more as you want. With a friend—and I insist upon your believing me to be such—these things have no character of obligation: you accommodate me to-day; I do the same for you to-morrow. And now, put these notes in your pocket. I see madame is waiting for us."

For a second or two, I felt so overpowered I could not speak: the generous confidence and friendly interest of one so thoroughly a stranger, were too much for my astonished and gratified mind. At last I recovered myself enough to reply, and assuring my worthy friend that when I

spoke of my debts they were in reality merely trifling ones; that I had still ample funds in my banker's hands for all necessary outlay; and that by the next post, perhaps, my long-wished-for letter might arrive.

“And if it should not?” interposed he, smiling.

“Why then the next day——”

“And if not then?” continued he, with a half-quizzing look at my embarrassment.

“Then your five thousand francs shall tremble for it.”

“That's a hearty fellow!” cried he, grasping my hand in both of his. “And now I feel I was not deceived in you. My first meeting with Metternich was very like this. I was at Presburg, in the year 1804, just before the campaign of Austerlitz opened——”

“You are indeed most gallant, messieurs,” said the countess, opening the door, and peeping in. “Am I to suppose that cigars and maraschino, are better company than mine?”

We rose at once to make our excuses; and thus I lost the story of Prince Metternich, in which I already felt an uncommon interest, from the simi-

clarity of the adventure to my own, though whether I was to represent the prince, or the count, I could not even guess.

I was soon seated beside the countess in the luxurious britzka; the count took his place on the box; and away we rattled over the *pavé*, through the Porte de Namur, and along the pretty suburbs of Etterbech, where we left the high road, and entered the Bois de Cambre by that long and beautiful *allée* which runs on for miles, like some vast aisle in a Gothic cathedral—the branches above, bending into an arched roof, and the tall beech stems standing like the pillars.

The pleasant odour of the forest, the tempered light, the noiseless roll of the carriage, gave a sense of luxury to the drive, I can remember vividly to this hour. Not that my enjoyment of such was my only one; far from it. The pretty countess talked away about every thing that came uppermost, in that strain of spirited and lively chit-chat, that needs not the sweetest voice and the most fascinating look, to make it most captivating. I felt like one in a dream; the whole thing was fairy land; and whether I looked

into the depths of the leafy wood, where some horsemen might now and then be seen to pass at a gallop, or my eyes fell upon that small and faultless foot that rested on the velvet cushion in the carriage, I could not trust the reality of the scene, and could only mutter to myself—"What hast thou ever done, Arthur O'Leary, or thy father before thee, to deserve happiness like this?"

Dear and kind reader, it may be your fortune to visit Brussels ; and although not exactly under such circumstances as I have mentioned here, let me advise you, even without a beautiful Polonaise for your companion, to make a trip to Boitsfort, a small village in the wood of Soignies. Of course your nationality will lead you to Waterloo ; and equally of course, if you have any tact,—which far be it from me not to suppose you gifted with,—you'll not dine there, the little miserable cabarets that are called "restaurants," being wretched beyond description: you may have a glass of wine, and if so, take champagne, for they cannot adulterate it; but don't venture on a dinner, if you hope to enjoy one again for a week after. Well then, "having done your Waterloo," as the cockneys say,

seen Sergeant Cotton and the church, La Haye Sainte, Hougomont, and Lord Anglesey's boot, take your road back, not by that eternal and noisy *chaussée* you have come by, but turn off to the right, as if going to Wavre, and enter the forest by an earth road, where you'll neither meet wagons, nor postillions, nor even a "pike." Your coachman will say, "Where to?" Reply, "Boitsfort," — which, for safety, pronounce "Boshfort,"—and lie back and enjoy yourself. About six miles of a delightful drive, all through forest, will bring you to a small village beside a little lake, surrounded by hills, not mountains, but still waving and broken in outline, and shaded with wood. The red-tiled roofs, the pointed gables, the green *jalousies*, and the back-ground of dark foliage, will all remind you of one of Berghem's pictures, and if a lazy Fleming or so are seen lounging over the little parapet next the water, they'll not injure the effect. Passing over the little bridge, you arrive in front of a long, low, two-storied house, perforated by an arched doorway leading into the court; over the door is an inscription, which at once denotes the object of

the establishment, and you read—" *Monsieur Dubos fait noces et festins.*" Not that the worthy individual officiates in any capacity resembling the famed Vulcan of the North; as far be it from him to invade the prerogatives of others, as for any to rival him in his own peculiar walk. No: Monsieur D.'s functions are limited to those delicate devices which are deemed the suitable diet of newly-married couples—those *petits plats* which are, like the orange-flower, only to be employed on great occasions. And, as such, he is unrivalled; for notwithstanding the simple and unpretending exterior, this little rural tavern can boast the most perfect cook, and the best-stored cellar; here may be found the earliest turkey of the year, with a dowry of truffles; here, the first peas of spring, the newest strawberries, and the richest cream, iced Champagne and grapy Hermitage, Steinberger and Johannisberg—are all at your orders. You may dine in the long *salon*, *en cabinet*, in the garden, or in the summer-house over the lake, where the carp is flapping his tail in the clear-water, the twin-brother of him at table: the garden beneath, sends up its delicious

odours from beds of every brilliant hue; the sheep are moving homeward along the distant hills, to the tinkle of the faint bell; the splash of an oar disturbs the calm water, as the fisherman skims along the lake; and the subdued murmurs of the little village all come floating in the air—pleasant sounds, and full of home thoughts. Well, well; to be sure I am a bachelor, and know nothing of such matters; but it strikes me I should like to be married now and then, and go eat my wedding-dinner at Boitsfort!

And now once more let me come back to my narrative; for leaving which, I should ask your pardon, were it not that the digression is the best part of the whole, and I should never forgive myself if I had not told you, not to stop at Brussels without dining at Boitsfort.

When we reached Boitsfort, a waiter conducted us at once to a little table in the garden where the strawberries and the iced champagne were in waiting. Here and there, at some distance, were parties of the Brussels bourgeoisie, enjoying themselves at their coffee, or with ice; while a large *salon* that occupied one wing of the building, was

given up to some English travellers, whose loud speech and boisterous merriment, bespoke them of that class one is always ashamed to meet with out of England.

“Your countrymen are very merry yonder,” said the countess, as a more uproarious burst than ever broke from the party.

“Yes,” said the count, perceiving that I felt uncomfortable at the allusion: “Englishmen always carry London about with them wherever they go. Meet them in the Caucasus, and you’ll find that they’ll have some imitation of a Black-wall dinner, or a Greenwich party.”

“How comes it,” said I, amazed at the observation, “that you know these places you mention?”

“Oh, my dear sir, I have been very much about the world in my time, and have always made it my business to see each people in their own peculiar haunts. If at Vienna, I dine not at the ‘Wilde Man,’ but at the ‘Fuchs’ in the Leopoldstadt. If in Dresden, I spend my evening in the Grün-Garten, beyond the Elbe. The bourgeoisie alone, of any nation, preserve traits marked

enough for a stranger's appreciation—the higher classes are pretty much alike everywhere, and the nationality of the peasant takes a narrow range, and offers little to amuse.”

“And the count is a quick observer,” remarked madame, with a look of pleasure sparkling in her eyes.

“I flatter myself,” rejoined he, “I seldom err in my guesses—I knew my friend here, tolerably accurately, without an introduction.”

There was something so kind in the tone he spoke in, I could have no doubt of his desire to compliment me.

“Independently, too, of speaking most of the languages of Europe, I possess a kind of knack for learning a patois,” continued he. “At this instant, I’ll wager a cigar with you, I’ll join that little knot of sober Belgians yonder, and by the magic of a few words of genuine Brussels French, I’ll pass muster as a Boss.”

The countess laughed heartily at the thought, and I joined in her mirth most readily.

“I take the wager,” cried I, “and hope sincerely to lose it.”

“Done,” said he, springing up and putting on his hat, while he made a short circuit in the garden, and soon afterwards appeared at the table with the Flemings, asking permission, as it seemed, to light a cigar from a lantern attached to the tree under which they sat.

If we were to judge from the merriment of the little group, his success was perfect, and we soon saw him seated amongst them, busily occupied in concocting a bowl of flaming “ponche,” of which it was clear, by his manner, he had invited the party to partake.

“Now Gustav is in his delight,” said the countess, in a tone of almost pique;—“he is a strange creature, and never satisfied if not doing something other people never think of. In half an hour he’ll be back here, with the whole history of Mynheer van Houdendrochen, and his wife, and their fourteen ‘mannikins;’ all their little absurdities and prejudices, he’ll catch them up, and for a week to come we shall hear nothing but Flemish French, and the habitudes of the Montagne de la Cour.”

For a few seconds I was vastly uncomfortable—

a thought glanced across me—what if it were for some absurd feature in me, in *my* manner, or *my* conversation, that he had deigned to make my acquaintance. Then came the recollection of his generous proposal, and I saw at once that I was putting a somewhat high price on my originality, if I valued it at five thousand francs.

“What ails you?” said the countess, in a low soft voice, as she lifted her eyes, and let them fall upon me with a most bewitching expression of interest. “I fear you are ill, or in low spirits.”

I endeavoured to rally and reply, when she went on.

“We must see you oftener. Gustav is so pleasant and so gay, he will be of great use to you. When he really takes a liking, he is delightful; and he has, in your case, I assure you ”

I knew not what to say, nor how look my gratitude for such a speech, and could only accomplish some few and broken words of thanks.

“Besides, you are about to be a traveller,” continued she; “and who can give you such

valuable information of every country and people, as the count? Do you intend to make a long absence from England?"

"Yes, at least some years. I wish to visit the East."

"You'll go into Poland?" said she, quickly, without noticing my reply.

"Yes, I trust so; Hungary and Poland have both great interest for me."

"You know that we are Poles, don't you?"

"Yes."

"We are both from beyond Varsovie. Gustav was there ten years ago. I have never seen my native country since I was a child."

At the last words, her voice dropped to a whisper, and she leaned her head upon her hand, and seemed lost in thought.

I did not dare break in upon the current of recollections I saw were crowding upon her, and was silent. She looked up at length, and by the faint light of the moon, just risen, I saw that her eyes were tearful, and her cheeks still wet with weeping.

What, said I to myself, and has sorrow come

even here—here, where I imagined if ever the sunny path of life existed, it was to be found.

“Should you like to hear a sad story?” said she, smiling faintly, with a look of indefinable sweetness.

“If it were yours it would make my heart ache,” said I, carried away by my feelings at the instant.

“I’ll tell it to you one of those days then—not now—not now though—I could not here—and there comes Gustav—how he laughs.”

And true enough, the merry sounds of his voice were heard through the garden as he approached; and strangely too, they seemed to grate and jar upon my ear, with a very different impression from what before they brought to me.

Our way back to Brussels led again through the forest, which now was wrapped in the shade, save where the moon came peeping down through the leafy branches, and falling in bright patches on the road beneath. The countess spoke a little at first, but gradually relapsed into perfect silence. The stillness and calm about, seemed only the more striking from the hollow tramp of the

horses, as they moved along the even turf. The air was mild and sweet, and loaded with that peculiar fragrance which a wood exhales after nightfall; and all the influences of the time and place, were of that soothing, lulling kind, that wraps the mind in a state of dreamy reverie. But one thought dwelt within me. It was of her who sat beside me, her head cast down, and her arms folded. She was unhappy—some secret sorrow was preying upon that fair bosom—some eating care corroding her very heart—a vague, shadowy suspicion shot through me, that her husband might have treated her cruelly and ill; but why suspect such—was not everything I witnessed the very reverse of such a fact? What could surpass the mutual kindness and good feeling that I saw between them—and yet their dispositions were not all alike—she seemed to hint as much. The very waywardness of his temperament—the incessant demand of his spirit for change, excitement, and occupation—how could it harmonize with her gentle and more constant nature? From such thoughts I was awakened by her saying, in a low, faint voice—

“You must forget what I said to-night. There are moments when some strong impulse will force the heart to declare the long-buried thoughts of years—perhaps some secret instinct tells us that we are near to those who can sympathise and feel for us—perhaps these are the overflowings of grief, without which the heart would grow full to bursting. Whatever they be, they seem to calm and soothe us, though afterwards we may sorrow for having indulged in them. You will forget it all, won't you?”

“I will do my best,” said I timidly, “to do all you wish; but I cannot promise you what may be out of my power: the few words you spoke have never left my mind since—nor can I say when I shall cease to remember them.”

“What do you think, Duischka?” said the count, as he flung away the fragment of his cigar, and turned round on the box. “What do you think of an invitation to dinner I have accepted for Tuesday next?”

“Where, pray?” said she, with an effort to seem interested.

“I am to dine with my worthy friend Van

‘Houdicamp, Rue de Lacken, number twenty-eight—a very high mark, let me tell you—his father was burgomaster at Alost, and he himself has a great sugar bakery, or salt ‘raffinerie,’ or something equivalent at Scharbeck.”

“How can you find any pleasure in such society, Gustav?”

“Pleasure you call it—delight is the word. I shall hear all the gossip of the Bas Ville—quite as amusing I’m certain as of the Place and the Boulevards; besides, there are to be some half dozen Echevins, with wives and daughters, and we shall have a round game for the most patriarchal stakes. I have also obtained permission to bring a friend—so you see, Monsieur O’Leary——”

“I’m certain,” interposed madame, “he has much better taste than to avail himself of your offer.”

“I’ll bet my life on it he’ll not refuse.”

“I say he will,” said the lady.

“I’ll wager that pearl ring at Mertan’s, that if you leave him to himself, he says ‘yes.’”

“Agreed,” said madame—“I accept the bet. We Poles are as great gamblers as yourselves, you

see," added she, turning to me. "Now, monsieur, decide the question—will you dine with Van Hottentot on Tuesday next—or with me?"

The last three words were spoken in so low a tone as made me actually suspect that my imagination alone had conceived them.

"Well," cried the count, "what say you?"

"I pronounce for the —— Hotel de France," said I, fearing in what words to accept the invitation of the lady.

"Then I have lost my bet," said the count, laughing; "and worse still, have found myself mistaken in my opinion."

"And I," said madame, in a faint whisper, "have won mine, and found my impressions more correct."

Nothing more occurred worth mentioning, on our way back; when we reached the hotel in safety, and separated with many promises to meet early next day.

From that hour, my intimacy took a form of almost friendship. I visited the count, or the countess, if he was out, every morning; chatted over the news of the day; made our plans for the

evening, either for the Boitsfort or Lacken, or occasionally the *allée verte*, or the theatre, and sometimes arranged little excursions to Antwerp, Louvain, or Ghent.

It is indeed a strange thing, to think of what slight materials happiness is made up. The nest that incloses our greatest pleasure, is a thing of straws and feathers, gathered at random or carried towards us by the winds of fortune. If you were to ask me now, what I deemed the most delightful period of my whole life, I don't hesitate to say I should name this. In the first place, the great requisite of happiness, I possessed—every moment of my whole day was occupied; each hour was chained to its fellow by some slight but invisible link; and whether I was hammering away at my Polish grammar, or sitting beside the pianoforte, while the countess sang some of her country's ballads, or listening to legends of Poland in its times of greatness, or galloping along at her side through the forest of Soignies, my mind was ever full—no sense of weariness or *ennui* ever invaded me; while a consciousness of a change in myself—I knew not what it was—

suggested a feeling of pleasure and delight I cannot account for or convey, and this I take it—though speaking in ignorance and merely from surmise—this I suspect is something like what people in love experience, and what gives them the ecstasy of the passion. There is sufficient concentration in the admiration of the loved object, to give the mind a decided and firm purpose, and enough of change in the various devices to win her praise, to impart the charm of novelty. Now for all this, my reader, fair or false as she or he may be, must not suspect that any thing bordering on love was concerned in the present case.

To begin—the countess was married, and I was brought up at an excellent school at Bangor, where the catechism, Welsh and English, was flogged into me until every commandment had a separate welt of its own on my back. No; I had taken the Royal road to happiness; I was delighted without stopping to know why, and enjoyed myself without ever thinking to inquire wherefore. New sources of information and knowledge were opened to me by those who

possessed vast stores of acquirement, and I learned how the conversation of gifted and accomplished persons, may be made a great agent in training and forming the mind, if not to the higher walks of knowledge, at least to those paths in which the greater part of life is spent, and where it imports each to make the road agreeable to his fellows. I have said to you I was not in love—how could I, under the circumstances?—but still I own that the regular verbs of the Polish grammar had been but dry work, if it had not been for certain irregular glances at my pretty mistress; nor could I ever have seen my way through the difficulties of the declensions, if the light of her eyes had not lit up the page, and her taper finger pointed out the place.

And thus two months flew past, during which she never even alluded most distantly to our conversation in the garden at Boitsfort, nor did I learn any one particular more of my friends than on the first day of our meeting. Meanwhile, all ideas of travelling had completely left me; and although I had now abundant resources in my banker's hands for all the purposes of the road, I

never once dreamed of leaving a place where I felt so thoroughly happy.

Such then was our life, when I began to remark a slight change in the count's manner—an appearance of gloom and preoccupation which seemed to increase each day, and against which he strove, but in vain, to combat. It was clear something had gone wrong with him, but I did not dare to allude to, much less ask him on the subject. At last one evening just as I was preparing for bed, he entered my dressing-room, and closing the door cautiously behind him, sat down. I saw that he was dressed as if for the road, and looking paler and more agitated than usual.

“O’Leary,” said he in a tremulous voice, “I am come to place in your hands the highest trust a man can repose in another—am I certain of your friendship?” I shook his hand in silence, and he went on. “I must leave Brussels to-night secretly. A political affair, in which the peace of Europe is involved, has just come to my knowledge; the government here will do their best to detain me; orders are already given to delay me at the frontier—perhaps send me back to the

capital; in consequence, I must cross the boundary on horseback, and reach Aix la Chapelle by to-morrow evening. Of course the countess cannot accompany me." He paused for a second. "You must be her protector. A hundred rumours will be afloat the moment they find I have escaped, and as many reasons for my departure announced in the papers. However, I'm content if they amuse the public and occupy the police, and meanwhile I shall obtain time to pass through Prussia unmolested. Before I reach St. Petersburg, the countess will receive letters from me, and know where to proceed to; and I count on your friendship to remain here until that time—a fortnight, three weeks at farthest. If money is any object to you——"

"Not in the least; I have far more than I want."

"Well, then, may I conclude that you consent?"

"Of course you may," said I, overpowered by a rush of sensations I must leave to my reader to feel, if it has ever been his lot to have been placed in such circumstances, or to imagine for me if he has not.

“The countess is of course aware-”

“Of everything,” interrupted he, “and bears it all admirably. Much, however, is attributable to the arrangement with you, which I promised her was completed, even before I asked your consent—such was my confidence in your friendship.”

“You have not deceived yourself,” was my reply, while I puzzled my brain to think how I could repay such proofs of his trust. “Is there anything, then, more,” said I—“can you think of nothing in which I may be of service?”

“Nothing, dear friend, nothing,” said he. “Probably we shall meet at St. Petersburg.”

“Yes, yes,” said I; “that is my firm intention.”

“That’s all I could wish for,” rejoined he. “The grand-duke will be delighted to acknowledge the assistance your friendship has rendered us, and Potoski’s house will be your own.” So saying, he embraced me most affectionately, and departed, while I sat to muse over the singularity of my position, and wonder if any other man was ever similarly situated.

When I proceeded to pay my respects to the countess the next morning, I prepared myself to witness a state of great sorrow and depression. How pleasantly was I disappointed at finding her gay—perhaps gayer than ever—and evidently enjoying the success of the count's scheme.

“Gustav is at St. Tron by this,” said she, looking at the map; “he'll reach Liege two hours before the post; fresh horses will then bring him rapidly to Battiste. Oh, here are the papers. Let us see the way his departure is announced.” She turned over one journal after another without finding the wished-for paragraph, until at last, in the corner of the “Handelsbad,” she came upon the following:—

“Yesterday morning an express reached the minister for the home affairs, that the celebrated *escroc*, the Chevalier Duguet, whose famous forgery on the Neapolitan bank may be in the memory of our readers, was actually practising his art under a feigned name in Brussels, where, having obtained his *entrée* among some respectable families of the lower town, he has succeeded in obtaining large sums of money under various

pretences; his skill at play is, they say, the least of his many accomplishments."

She threw down the paper in a fit of laughter at these words, and called out—"Is it not too absurd. That's Gustav's doing—anything for a quiz—no matter what. He once got himself and Prince Carl of Prussia brought up before the police for hooting the king."

"But Duguet," said I—"what has he to do with Duguet?"

"Don't you see that's a feigned name," replied she—"assumed by him as if he had half a dozen such. Read on, and you'll learn it all."

I took the paper and continued where she ceased reading:—

"This Duguet is then, it would appear, identical with a very well-known Polish Count Czaroviski, who, with his lady, have been passing some weeks at the Hotel de France. The police have, however, received his '*signalement*,' and are on his track."

"But why, in heaven's name, should he spread such an odious calumny on himself?" said I.

"Dear me, how very simple you are. I thought

he had told you all. As a mere '*escroc*,' money will always bribe the authorities to let him pass ; as a political offender, and as such the importance of his mission would proclaim him, nothing would induce the officials to further his escape—their own heads would pay for it. Once over the frontier, the '*ruse*' will be discovered, the editors obliged to eat their words, and be laughed at, and Gustav receive the black eagle for his services. But see, here's another."

"Among the victims at play of the well-known Chevalier Duguet, or as he is better known here, the Count Czaroviski, is a simple Englishman, resident at the Hotel de France, and from whom it seems he has won every louis-d'or he possessed in the world. This miserable dupe, whose name is O'Learie, or O'Leary——"

At these words she leaned back on the sofa and laughed immoderately.

"Have you, then, suffered so deeply?" said she, wiping her eyes—"has Gustav really won all your louis-d'ors?"

"This is too bad—far too bad," said I ; "and I really cannot comprehend how any intrigue could

induce him so far to asperse his character in this manner: I, for my part, can be no party to it."

As I said this, my eyes fell on the latter part of the paragraph, which ran thus:—

"This poor boy—for we understand he is no more—has been lured to his ruin by the beauty and attraction of Madame Czaroviski."

I crushed the odious paper without venturing to see more, and tore it in a thousand pieces, and, not waiting an instant, hurried to my room and seized a pen; burning with indignation and rage, I wrote a short note to the editor, in which I not only contradicted the assertions of his correspondent, but offered a reward of a hundred louis for the name of the person who had invented the infamous calumny.

It was some time before I recovered my composure sufficiently to return to the countess, whom I now found greatly excited and alarmed at my sudden departure. She insisted with such eagerness on knowing what I had done, that I was obliged to confess everything, and show her a copy of the letter I had already despatched to the

editor. She grew pale as death as she read it, flushed deeply, and then became pale again, while she sank faint and sick into a chair.

"This is very noble conduct of yours," said she, in a low, hollow voice; "but I see where it will lead to—Czaroviski has great and powerful enemies; they will become yours also."

"Be it so," said I, interrupting her. "They have little power to injure me—let them do their worst."

"You forget, apparently," said she, with a most bewitching smile, "that you are no longer free to dispose of your liberty—that, as *my* protector, you cannot brave dangers and difficulties which may terminate in a prison."

"What, then, would you have me do?"

"Hasten to the editor at once; erase so much of your letter as refers to the proposed reward; the information could be of no service to you if obtained—some 'miserable,' perhaps some spy of the police, the slanderer. What could you gain by his punishment, save publicity? A mere denial of the facts alleged is quite sufficient; and even that," continued she, smiling, "how super-

fluuous is it after all: a week—ten days at farthest, and the whole mystery is unveiled. Not that I would dissuade you from a course I see your heart is bent upon, and which, after all, is a purely personal consideration.”

“Yes,” said I, after a pause, “I’ll take your advice: the letter shall be inserted without the concluding paragraph.”

The calumnious reports on the count, prevented madame dining that day at the *table d’hôte*, and I remarked as I took my place at table, a certain air of constraint and reserve among the guests, as though my presence had interdicted the discussion of a topic which occupied all Brussels. Dinner over, I walked into the park to meditate on the course I should pursue under present circumstances, and deliberate with myself how far the habits of my former intimacy might or might not be admissible, during her husband’s absence. The question was solved for me sooner than I anticipated; for a waiter overtook me with a short note written with a pencil; it ran thus:—

“They play the *Zauberflöte* to-night at the

Opera; I shall go at eight—perhaps you would like a seat in the carriage.

“DUISCHKA.”

Whatever doubts I might have conceived about my conduct, the manner of the countess at once dispelled them. A tone of perfect ease, and almost sisterly confidence, marked her whole bearing; and while I felt delighted and fascinated by the freedom of our intercourse, I could not help thinking how impossible such a line of acting would have been in my own more rigid country, and to what cruel calumnies and aspersions it would have subjected her. Truly, thought I, if they manage these things, as Sterne says they do, “better in France,” they also far excel in them in Poland; and so my Polish grammar, and the canzonettes, and the drives to Boitsfort, all went on as usual, and my dream of happiness, interrupted for a moment, flowed on again in its former channel with increased force.

A fortnight had now elapsed, without any letter from the count, save a few hurried lines written from Magdeburg; and I remarked that the coun-

tess betrayed at times a degree of anxiety and agitation I had not observed in her before. At last, the secret cause came out. We were sitting together in the park, eating ice after dinner, when she suddenly rose, and prepared to leave the place.

“Has anything happened to annoy you?” said I, hurriedly. “Why are you going?”

“I can bear it no longer!” cried she, as she drew her veil down, and hastened forward, and without speaking another word, continued her way towards the hotel. On reaching her apartments, she burst into a torrent of tears, and sobbed most violently.

“What is it?” said I, maddened by the sight of such sorrow. “For heaven’s sake tell me. Has any one dared——”

“No, no,” replied she, wiping the tears away with her handkerchief; “nothing of the kind. It is the state of doubt—of trying, harassing uncertainty I am reduced to here, is breaking my heart. Don’t you see that, whenever I appear in public, by the air of insufferable impudence of the men, and the still more insulting looks of the women,

how they dare to think of me. I have borne it as well as I was able hitherto; I can do so no longer."

"What!" cried I, impetuously, "and shall one dare to——"

"The world will always dare what may be dared in safety," interrupted she, laying her hand on my arm. "They know that you could not make a quarrel on my account, without compromising my honour; and such an occasion to trample on a poor weak woman, could not be lost. Well, well; Gustav may write to-morrow or next day. A little more patience; and it is the only cure for these evils."

There was a tone of angelic sweetness in her voice as she spoke these words of resignation, and never did she seem more lovely in my eyes.

"Now, then, as I shall not go to the opera, what shall we do to pass the time? You are tired—I know you are—of Polish melodies and German ballads. Well, well; then I am. I have told you that we Poles are as great gamblers as yourselves? What say you to a game at picquet?"

"By all means," said I, delighted at the prospect of anything to while away the hours of her sorrowing.

"Then you must teach me," rejoined she, laughing, "for I don't know it. I'm wretchedly stupid about all these things, and never could learn any game but *ecarté*."

"Then *ecarté* be it," said I: and in a few minutes more I had arranged the little table, and down we sat to our party.

"There," said she, laughing and throwing her purse on the table, "I can only afford to lose so much; but you may win all that, if you're fortunate." A rouleau of louis escaped at the instant, and fell about the table.

"Agreed," said I, indulging the quiz. "I am an inveterate gambler, and play always high. What shall be our stakes?"

"Fifty, I suppose," said she, still laughing: "we can increase our bets afterwards."

After some little *badinage*, we each placed a double louis-d'or on the board, and began. For a while the game employed our attention; but gradually we fell into conversation, the cards

gradually dropped listlessly from our hands, the tricks remained unclaimed, and we could never decide whose turn it was to deal.

"This wearies you, I see," said she: "perhaps you'd like to stop?"

"By no means," said I. "I like the game, of all things." This I said rather because I was a considerable winner at the time, than from any other motive: and so we played on till eleven o'clock, at which hour I usually took my leave; and by this time my gains had increased to some seventy louis.

"Is it not fortunate," said she, laughing, "that eleven has struck? You'd certainly have won all my gold; and now you must leave off in the midst of your good fortune: and so, *bon soir, et a revanche.*"

Each evening now, saw our little party at *ecarté* usurp the place of the drive and the opera; and though our successes ran occasionally high at either side, yet, on the whole, neither was a winner, and we jested about the impartiality with which fortune treated us both.

At last, one evening, eleven struck when I was

a greater winner than ever, and I thought I saw a little pique in her manner at the enormous run of luck I had experienced throughout.

“Come,” said she, laughing, “you have really wounded a national feeling in a Polish heart—you have asserted a superiority at a game of skill. I must beat you:” and with that she placed five louis on the table. She lost. Again the same stake followed, and again the same fortune; notwithstanding that I did all in my power to avoid winning—of course without exciting her suspicions.

“And so,” said she, as she dealt the cards, “Ireland is really so picturesque as you say?”

“Beautifully so,” replied I, as warmed up by a favourite topic, I launched forth into a description of the mountain scenery of the south and west; the rich emerald green of the valleys, the wild fantastic character of the mountains, the changeful skies, were all brought up to make a picture for her admiration; and she did indeed seem to enjoy it with the highest zest, only interrupting me in my harangue by the words, “*Je marque le Roi*,” to which circumstance she

directed my attention by a sweet smile, and a gesture of her taper finger. And thus hour followed hour; and already the grey dawn was breaking, while I was just beginning an eloquent description of "The Killeries," and the countess suddenly looking at her watch, cried out—

"How very dreadful! only think of three o'clock!"

True enough; it was that hour: and I started up to say "Good-night," shocked at myself for so far transgressing, and yet secretly flattered that my conversational powers had made time slip by uncounted.

"And the Irish are really so clever, so gifted as you say?" said she, as she held out her hand to wish me good-night.

"The most astonishing quickness is theirs," replied I, half reluctant to depart: "nothing can equal their intelligence and shrewdness."

"How charming! *Bon soir*," said she, and I closed the door.

What dreams were mine that night! What delightful visions of lake scenery and Polish countesses,—and mountain gorges and blue eyes,

—of deep ravines, and lovely forms! I thought we were sailing up Lough Corrib; the moon was up, spangling and flecking the rippling lake; the night was still and calm, not a sound save the cuckoo was heard breaking the silence; as I listened I started, for I thought, instead of her wonted note, her cry was ever, “*Je marque le Roi.*”

Morning came at last; but I could not awake, and endeavoured to sink back into the pleasant realm of dreams, from which daylight disturbed me. It was noon when at length I succeeded in awaking perfectly.

“A note for monsieur,” said a waiter, as he stood beside the bed.

I took it eagerly. It was from the countess: its contents were these:—

“MY DEAR SIR,—A hasty summons from Count Czaroviski has compelled me to leave Brussels without wishing you good-by, and thanking you for all your polite attentions. Pray accept these hurried acknowledgements, and my regret that circumstances do not enable me to

visit Ireland, in which, from your description, I must ever feel the deepest interest.

“The count sends his most affectionate greetings.

“Yours ever sincerely,

“DUISCHKA CZAROVISKI née GUTZLAFF.”

“And is she gone?” said I, starting up in a state of frenzy.

“Yes, sir, she started at ten o'clock.”

“By what road?” cried I, determined to follow her on the instant.

“Louvain was the first stage.”

In an instant I was up, and dressed; in ten minutes more I was rattling over the *pavé* to my bankers.

“I want three hundred Napoleons—at once,” said I to the clerk.

“Examine Mr. O'Leary's account,” was the dry reply of the functionary.

“Over-drawn by fifteen hundred francs,” said the other.

“Over-drawn? impossible!” cried I, thunder-struck. “I had a credit of six hundred pounds.”

"Which you drew out by cheque this morning," said the clerk. "Is not that your hand-writing?"

"It is," said I faintly, as I recognized my own scrawl, dated the evening before.

I had lost above seven hundred, and had not a sous left to pay post-horses.

I sauntered back sadly to "The France," a sadder man than ever in my life before: a thousand tormenting thoughts were in my brain; and a feeling of contempt for myself, somehow, occupied a very prominent place. Well, well; it's all past and gone now, and I must not awaken buried griefs.

I never saw the count and countess again; and though I have since that been in St. Petersburg, the "Grand-Duke" seems to have forgotten my services, and a very pompous-looking porter in a bear-skin did not look exactly the kind of person to whom I should wish to communicate my impression about "Count Potoski's house being my own."

CHAPTER XI.

A FRAGMENT OF FOREST LIFE.

I AM half sorry already that I have told that little story of myself. Somehow the recollection is painful; and now I would rather hasten away from Brussels, and wander on to other scenes; and yet there are many things I fain would speak of, and some people, too, worth a mention in passing. I should like to have taken you a moonlight walk through the "Grand Place," and, after tracing against the clear sky the delicate outline of the beautiful spire, whose gilded point seemed stretching away towards the bright star above it, to have shown you the interior of a Flemish club in the old "Salle de Loyauté." Primitive, quaint fellows, they are, these Flemings—consequential, sedate, self-satisfied, simple creatures—credulous to any extent of their own importance, but kindly withal; not hospitable themselves, but admirers

of the virtue in others; easily pleased, when the amusement costs little; and, in a word, a people admirably adapted by nature to become a kind of territorial coinage, alternately paid over by one great state to another, as the balance of Europe inclines to this side or that; with industry enough always to be worth robbing, and with a territory perfectly suitable to pitched battles; two admirable reasons exist for Belgium being a species of Hounslow Heath or Wormwood Scrubs, as the nations of the Continent feel disposed for theft or fighting. It was a cruel joke, however, to make them into a nation. One gets tired of laughing at them at last; and even Sancho's Island of Barataria had become a nuisance, were it long lived.

Well, I must hasten away now. I can't go back to "The France" yet a while, so I'll even take to the road—but what road? That's the question. What a luxury it would be, to be sure, to have some person of exquisite taste, who could order dinner every day in the year—arranging the *carte* by a physiognomical study of your countenance—and plan out your route by some innate

sense of your desires. Arthur O'Leary has none such, however; his whole philosophy in life being to throw the reins on the hack Fortune's neck, and let the jade take her own way. Not that he has had any reason to regret his mode of travel. No; his nag has carried him pleasantly on through life—now cantering softly over the even turf, now picking her way more cautiously among bad ground and broken pebbles—and if here and there an occasional side leap or a start has put him out of saddle, it has scarcely put him out of temper; for one great secret has he at least learned—and, after all, it's one worth remembering: very few of the happiest events and pleasantest circumstances in our lives, have not their origin in some incident, which, had we been able, we had prevented happening. So then, while taking your mare "Chance" over a stiff country, be advised by me, give her plenty of head, sit close, and when you come to a "rasper," let her take her own way over it. So convinced am I of the truth of this axiom, that I should not die easy if I had not told it; and now, if anything should prevent these Fragments being printed, I leave a

clause in my will to provide for three O'Leary treatises, to establish this fact, being written, for which my executors are empowered to pay five pounds sterling for each. Why, were it not for this, I had been married, say at the least some fourteen times, in various quarters of the globe, and might have had a family of children, black and white, sufficient to make a set of chess men among them. There's no saying what might have happened to me. It would seem like boasting, if I said that the Emperor of Austria had some notions of getting rid of Metternich to give me the "Foreign Affairs;" and that I narrowly escaped once commanding the Russian fleet in the Baltic. But of these, at another time—I only wish to keep the principle at present in view—that Fortune will always do better for us than we could do for ourselves; but to this end there must be no tampering or meddling, on our part. The goddess is not a West-end physician, who, provided you are ever prepared with your fee, blandly permits you all the little excesses you are bent on. No; she is of the Abernethy school, somewhat rough occasionally, but always honest—never

suffering any interference from the patient, but exacting implicit faith and perfect obedience. As for me, I follow the regimen prescribed for me, without a thought of opposition; and wherever I find myself in this world, be it China or the Caucasus, Ghuznee, Genoa, or Glasnevin, I feel for the time that's my fitting place, and endeavour to make the best of it.

The pedestrian alone, of all travellers, is thus taken by the hand by Fortune. Your extra-post, with a courier on the box, interferes sadly with the current of all those little incidents of the road which are ever happening to him who takes to the "by-ways" of the world. The odds are about one hundred to one against you, that when seated in your carriage, the postillion in his saddle, and the fat courier outside, the words "*en route*" being given, you arrive at your destination that evening, without any accident or adventure whatever of more consequence than a lost shoe from the near leader, a snapped spring, or a heart-burn from the glass of bad brandy you took at the third stage. A blue post, with white stripes on it, tells you that you are in Prussia; or a

yellow and brown pole, that the Grand-Duke of Nassau is giving you the hospitality of his territory—save which you have no other evidence of change. The village inn, and its little circle of celebrities, opens not to *you* those peeps at humble life so indicative of national character: *you* stop not at the way-side chapel, in the sultry heat of noon, to charm away your peaceful hour of reflection—now turning from the lovely madonna above the altar, to the peasant girl who kneels in supplication beneath—now contrasting the stern features of some painted martyr with the wrinkled front and weather-beaten traits, of some white-haired beggar—now musing over the quiet existence of the humble figure whose heavy sabots wake the echoes of the vaulted isle—or watching, perhaps, that venerable priest who glides about before the altar in his white robes, and disappears by some unseen door, seeming like a phantom of the place. The little relics of village devotion, so touching in their poverty, awake no thought within *you* of the pious souls in yonder hamlet. The old curé himself, as he jogs along on his ambling pony, suggests nothing save the figure of age and

decrepitude. *You* have not seen the sparkling eyes and flushed cheeks of his humble flock, who salute him as he passes, nor gazed upon that broad high forehead, where benevolence and charity have fixed their dwelling. The foot-sore veteran or the young conscript, have not been your fellow-travellers—mayhap you would despise them. Their joys and sorrows, their hopes, their fears, their wishes, all move in a humble sphere, and little suit the ears of those whose fortune is a higher one.

Not that the staff and the knapsack are the passports to only such as these. My experience would tell very differently. With some of the most remarkable men I ever met, my acquaintance grew on the road—some of the very pleasantest moments of my life had their origin in the chances of the way-side—the little glimpses I have ever enjoyed of national character, have been owing to these same accidents; and I have often hailed some casual interruption to my route, some passing obstacle to my journey, as the source of an adventure which might afford me the greatest pleasure. I date this feeling to a

good number of years back—and in a great measure to an incident that occurred to me when first wandering in this country. It is scarcely a story, but as illustrating my position, I will tell it.

Soon after the *denouement* of my Polish adventure—I scarcely like to be more particular in my designation of it—I received a small remittance from England, and started for Namur. My uncle Toby's recollections had been an inducement for the journey, had I not the more pleasant one in my wish to see the Meuse, of whose scenery I had already heard so much.

The season was a delightful one—the beginning of autumn; and truly the country far surpassed all my anticipations. The road to Dinant led along by the river—the clear stream rippling at one side; at the other, the massive granite rocks, rising to several hundred feet, frowned above you; some gnarled oak or hardy ash clinging to the steep cliffs, and hanging their drooping leaves above your head; on the opposite bank, meadows of emerald green, intersected with ash rows and tall poplars, stretched away to the back ground

of dense forest that bounded the view to the very horizon.

Here and there, a little farm-house framed in wood, and painted in many a gaudy colour, would peep from the little inclosure of vines and plum-trees; more rarely still, the pointed roof and turreted gable of a venerable chateau, would rise above the trees. How often did I stop to gaze on these quaint old edifices, with their ballustrades and terraces—on which a solitary peacock walked proudly to and fro: the only sound that stirred, the hissing plash of the *jet d'eau*, whose sparkling drops came pattering on the broad water lilies; and as I looked, I wondered within myself what kind of life they led who dwelt there. The windows were open to the ground, bouquets of rich flowers stood on the little tables. These were all signs of habitation, yet no one moved about—no stir nor bustle denoted that there were dwellers there. How different from the country life of our great houses in England, with trains of servants and equipages hurrying hither and thither; all the wealth and magnificence of the great capital transported to some far-off county—

that *ennui* and fastidiousness, fatigue and lassitude, should lose none of their habitual aids. Well, for *my* part, the life among green trees and flowers, where the thrush sings, and the bee goes humming by, can scarcely be too homely for *my* taste: it is in the peaceful aspect of all Nature, the sense of calm that breathes from every leafy grove and rippling stream, that I feel the soothing influence of the country. I could sit beside the trickling stream of water, clear, but brown, that comes drop by drop from some fissure in the rocky cliff, and falls into the little well below, and dream away for hours. These slight and simple sounds, that break the silence of the calm air, are all fraught with pleasant thoughts. The unbroken stillness of a prairie is the most awful thing in all nature.

Unoppressed in heart, I took my way along the river's bank, my mind revolving the quiet pleasant thoughts silence and lovely scenery are so sure to suggest. Towards noon I sat myself down on a large flat rock beside the stream, and proceeded to make my humble breakfast—some bread and a few cresses, washed down with

a little water, scarce flavoured with brandy, followed by my pipe; and I lay watching the white bubbles that flowed by me, until I began to fancy I could read a moral lesson in their course. Here was a great swollen fellow, rotund and full, elbowing out of his way all his lesser brethren, jostling and pushing aside each he met with; but at last bursting from very plethora, and disappearing as though he had never been: there were a myriad of little bead-like specks, floating past noiselessly, and yet having their own goal and destination: some uniting with others, grew stronger and hardier, and braved the current with bolder fortune; while others vanished ere you could see them well. A low murmuring splash against the reeds beneath the rock, drew my attention to the place, and I perceived that a little boat, like a canoe, was fastened by a hay-rope to the bank, and surged with each motion of the stream against the weeds. I looked about to see the owner, but no one could I detect—not a living thing seemed near, nor even a habitation of any kind. The sun at that moment shone strongly out, lighting up all the rich landscape on

the opposite side of the river, and throwing long gleams into a dense beech wood, where a dark, grass-grown alley entered. Suddenly, the desire seized me to enter the forest by that shady path. I strapped on my knapsack at once, and stepped into the little boat. There was neither oar nor paddle, but as the river was shallow, my long staff served as a pole to drive her across, and I reached the shore safely. Fastening the craft securely to a branch, I set forward towards the wood. As I approached, a little board, nailed to a tree, drew my eye towards it, and I read the nearly-effaced inscription, "*Route des Ardennes.*" What a thrill did not these words send through my heart: and was this, indeed, the forest of which Shakspeare told us—was I really "under the greenwood tree," where fair Rosalind had rested, and where melancholy Jacques had mused and mourned; and as I walked along, how instinct with his spirit did each spot appear. There, was the oak,

"Whose antique root peeps out
Upon the brook that brawls along the wood."

A little farther on I came upon

“The bank of osiers by the murmuring stream.”

What a bright prerogative has genius, that thus can people space with images which time and years erase not; making to the solitary traveller a world of bright thoughts even in the darkness of a lonely wood! And so to me appeared, as though before me, the scenes he pictured. Each rustling breeze that shook the leafy shade, seemed like the impetuous passion of the devoted lover—the chirping notes of the wood-pigeon, like the flippant raillery of beauteous Rosalind—and in the low ripple of the brook I heard the complaining sounds of Jacques himself.

Sunk in such pleasant fancies I lay, beneath a spreading sycamore; and with half-closed lids invoked the shades of that delightful vision before me, when the tramp of feet, moving across the low brushwood, suddenly aroused me. I started up on one knee, and listened. The next moment three men emerged from the wood into the path; the two foremost, dressed in blouses, were armed

with carbines and a sabre; the last carried a huge sack on his shoulders, and seemed to move with considerable difficulty.

“*Ventre du diable,*” cried he passionately, as he placed his burden on the ground; “don’t hasten on this way—they’ll never follow us so far, and I am half dead with fatigue.”

“Come, come, Gros Jean,” said one of the others, in a voice of command; “we must not halt before we reach the three elms.”

“Why not bury it here?” replied the first speaker, “or else take your share of the labour?”

“So I would,” retorted the other, violently, “if *you* could take *my* place when we are attacked; but, *parbleu*, you are more given to running away than fighting.”

During this brief colloquy, my heart rose to my mouth. The ruffianly looks of the party, their arms, their savage demeanour, and their secret purpose, whatever it was, to which I was now to a certain extent privy, filled me with terror; and I made a half effort to draw myself back on my hands into the brushwood beneath the tree. The

motion unfortunately discovered me; and with a spring, the two armed fellows bounded towards me, and levelled their pistols at my head.

"Who are you? What brings you here?" shouted they both in a breath.

"For heaven's sake, Messieurs," said I, "down with your pistols. I am only a traveller—a poor inoffensive wanderer—an Englishman, an Irishman, rather—a good Catholic"—heaven forgive me if I meant an equivocation here—"lower the pistols, I beseech you."

"Shoot him through the skull; he's a spy," roared the fellow with the sack.

"Not a bit of it," said I; "I'm a mere traveller, admiring the country, and an——"

"And why have you tracked us out here?" said one of the first speakers.

"I did not; I was here before you came. Do put down the pistols, for the love of Mary; there's no guarding against accidents, even with the most cautious."

"Blow his brains out," reiterated he of the bag, louder than before.

"Don't, Messieurs—don't mind *him*; he's a

coward—you are brave men, and have nothing to fear from a poor devil like me.”

The two armed fellows laughed heartily at this speech, while the other, throwing the sack from him, rushed at me with clenched hands.

“Hold off, Gros Jean,” said one of his companions; “if he never tells a heavier lie than that, he may make an easy confession on Sunday;” and with that he pushed him rudely back, and stood between us. “Come, then,” cried he, “take up that sack and follow us.”

My blood curdled at the order; there was something fearful in the very look of the long bag as it lay on the ground. I thought I could actually trace the outline of a human figure. Heaven preserve me, I believed I saw it move.

“Take it up,” cried he, sternly; “there’s no fear of it biting you.”

“Ah,” said I to myself, “the poor fellow is dead, then.”

Without more ado they placed the bag on my shoulders, and ordered me to move forward.

I grew pale and sick, and tottered at each step.

"Is it the smell affects you?" said one, with a demoniac sneer.

"Pardon, Messieurs," said I, endeavouring to pluck up courage, and seem at ease; "I never carried a—— a thing like this before."

"Step out, briskly," cried he; "you've a long way before you;" and with that he moved to the front, while the others brought up the rear.

As we proceeded on our way, they informed me that if by any accident they should be overtaken by any of my friends or associates, meaning thereby any of the human race that should chance to walk that way; the first thing they would do would be, to shoot me dead—a circumstance that considerably damped all my ardour for a rescue, and made me tremble, lest, at any turn of the way, some faggot-gatherer might appear in sight. Meanwhile, never did a man labour more strenuously to win the favour of his company.

I began by protesting my extreme innocence—vowed that a man of more estimable and amiable qualities than myself never did, nor never would exist. To this declaration they listened with manifest impatience, if not with actual displeasure.

I then tried another tack. I abused the rich and commended the poor—I harangued, in round terms, on the grabbing monopoly of the great, who enjoyed all the good things of this life, and would share none with their neighbours. I even hinted a sly encomium on those public-spirited individuals, whose gallantry and sense of justice, led them to risk their lives in endeavours to equalize somewhat more fairly this world's wealth; and who were so ungenerously styled robbers and highwaymen, though they were in reality benefactors and heroes. But they only laughed at this; nor did they show any real sympathy with my opinions, till, in my general attack on all constituted authorities, kings, priests, statesmen, judges, and gendarmes, by chance I included revenue officers. The phrase seemed like a spark on gunpowder.

“Curses be on the wretches—they are the plague-spots of the world,” cried I, seeing how they caught at the bait; “and thrice honoured the brave fellows who would relieve suffering humanity from the burden of such odious oppression.”

A low whispering now took place among my escort, and at length he who seemed the leader, stopped me short, and placing his hand on my shoulder, cried out—

“Are you sincere in all this? Are these your notions?”

“Can you doubt me?” said I. “What reasons have I for speaking them? How do I know but you are revenue officers that listen to me.”

“Enough. You shall join us. We are going to pass this sack of cigars.”

“Ho! these are cigars, then,” said I, brightening up. “It is not a —— a——eh?”

“They are Dutch cigars, and the best that can be made,” said he, not minding my interruption. “We shall pass them over the frontier by Sedan to-morrow night, and then we come back to Dinant, where you shall come with us.”

“Agreed,” said I, while a faint chill ran through my limbs, and I could scarcely stand—images of galley life, irons with cannon shot, and a yellow uniform, all flitting before me. From this moment, they became extremely communicative, detailing for my amusement many pleasing inci-

dents of their blameless life—how they burned a custom-house here, and shot an inspector there; and, in fact, displaying the advantages of my new profession, with all its attractions, before me. How I grinned with mock delight at atrocities that made my blood curdle, and chuckled over the roasting of a revenue officer as though he had been a chesnut. I affected to see drollery in cruelties that deserved the gallows, and laughed till the tears came, at horrors that nearly made me faint. My concurrence and sympathy absolutely delighted the devils, and we shook hands a dozen times over.

It was evening, when tired and weary, I was ready to drop with fatigue, my companions called a halt.

“Come, my friend,” said the chief, “we’ll relieve you now of your burden. You would be of little service to us at the frontier, and must wait for us here till our return.”

It was impossible to make any proposal more agreeable to my feelings. The very thought of being quit of my friends was extasy. I did not

dare, however, to vent my raptures openly, but satisfied myself with a simple acquiescence.

“And when,” said I, “am I to have the pleasure of seeing you again, gentlemen?”

“By to-morrow forenoon, at farthest.”

By that time, thought I, I shall have made good use of my legs, please Heaven.

“Meanwhile,” said Gros Jean, with a grin that showed he had neither forgotten nor forgiven my insults to his courage—“meanwhile we’ll just beg leave to fasten you to this tree;” and with the words, he pulled from a great canvass pocket he wore at his belt, a hank of strong cord, and proceeded to make a slip noose on it.

“It’s not your intention, surely, to tie me here for the whole night,” said I, in horror.

“And why not?” interposed the chief. “Do you think there are bears or wolves in the Ardennes forest in September.”

“But I shall die of cold or hunger. I never endured such usage before.”

“You’ll have plenty worse when you’ve joined us, I promise you,” was the short reply, as, with-

out further loss of time, they passed the cord round my waist, and began, with a dexterity that bespoke long practice, to fasten me to the tree. I protested in all form against the proceeding—I declaimed loudly about the liberty of the subject—vowed that England would take a frightful measure of retribution on the whole country, if a hair of my head were injured—and even went so far in the fervour of my indignation, as to threaten the party with future consequences from the police.

The word was enough. The leader drew his pistol from his belt, and slapping down the pan, shook the priming with his hand.

“So,” cried he, in a harsh and savage voice, unlike his former tone, “you’d play the informer, would you? Well, it’s honest at least to say as much. Now then, my man, a quick shrift and a short prayer, for I’ll send you where you’ll meet neither gendarmes nor revenue officers, or if you do, they’ll have enough of business on their hands not to care for yours.”

“Spare my life, most amiable Monsieur,” said I, with uplifted hands. “Never shall I utter one

word about you, come what will. I'll keep all I've seen a secret. Don't kill the father of eight children. Let me live this time, and I'll never wander off a turnpike road, three yards, as long as I breathe."

They actually screamed with laughter at the terror of my looks; and the chief, seemingly satisfied with my protestation, replaced his pistol in his belt, and kneeling down on the ground, began leisurely to examine my knapsack, which he coolly unstrapped and emptied on the grass.

"What are these papers?" said he, as he drew forth a most voluminous roll of manuscript from a pocket.

"They are notes of my travels," said I, obsequiously—"little pen sketches of men and manners in the countries I've travelled in. I call them 'The Loiterings of Arthur O'Leary.' That's my name, gentlemen—at your service."

"Ah! indeed. Well, then, we've given you a very pretty little incident for your journal this evening," said he, laughing, "in return for which I'll ask leave to borrow these memoranda for wadding for my gun. Believe me, Monsieur

O'Leary, they'll make a greater noise in the world under *my* auspices than under yours;" and with that he opened a rude clasp knife and proceeded to cut my valued manuscript into pieces about an inch square. This done, he presented two of my shirts to each of his followers, reserving three for himself; and having made a most impartial division of my other effects, he pocketed the purse I carried, with its few gold pieces, and then, rising to his feet, said—

"Antoine, let us be stirring now—the moon will be up soon. Gros Jean, throw that sack on your shoulder and move forward: and now, Monsieur, I must wish you a good night; and as in this changeful life we can never answer for the future, let me commend myself to your recollection hereafter, if, as may be, we should not meet again. Adieu, adieu;" said he, waving his hand.

"Adieu," said I with a great effort to seem at ease—"a pleasant journey, and every success to your honest endeavours."

"You are a fine fellow," said he, stopping and turning about suddenly; "a superb fellow; and I

can't part from you without a '*gage d'amitié*' between us;" and with the word he took my handsome travelling cap from my head and placed it on his own, while he crowned me with a villainous straw thing, that nothing save my bondage prevented me from hurling at his feet.

He now hurried forward after the others, and in a few minutes I was in perfect solitude. Well, thought I—it was my first thought—it might all have been worse; the wretches might have murdered me—and such reckless devils as practise their trade, care little for human life. Murder, too, would only meet the same punishment as smuggling, or nearly so—a year more, or a year less at the galleys: and, after all, the night is fine; and if I mistake not, he said something about the moon. I wondered where was the pretty countess—travelling away, probably, as hard as extra post could bring her. Ah! she little thought of my miserable plight now! Then came a little interval of softness—and then a little turn of indignation at my treatment—that I, an Englishman, should be so barbarously molested—a native of the land where freedom was the great



birthright of every one. I called to mind all the fine things Burke used to say about liberty—and if I had not begun to feel so cold, I'd have tried to sing "Rule Britannia," just to keep up my spirits; and then I fell asleep—if sleep it could be called—that frightful nightmare of famished wolves howling about me, tearing and mangling revenue officers; and grisly bears running backward and forward with smuggled tobacco on their backs. The forest seemed peopled by every species of horrible shapes—half men, half beast—but all with straw hats on their heads, and leather gaiters on their legs. However, the night passed over, and the day began to break—the purple tint, pale and streaky, that announces the rising sun, was replacing the cold grey of the darker hours. What a different thing it is, to be sure, to get out of your bed deliberately, and rubbing your eyes for two or three minutes with your fingers, as you stand at the half-closed curtain, and then, through the mist of your sleep, look out upon the east, and think you see the sun rising, and totter back to the comfortable nest again—the whole incident not breaking your sleep, but merely being inter-

woven with your dreams—a thing to dwell on among other pleasant fancies, and to be boasted of the whole day afterwards—what a different thing it is, I say, from the sensations of him who has been up all night in the mail—shaken, bruised, and cramped—sat on by the fat man, and kicked by the lean one; still, worse of him who spends his night *dos à dos* to an oak in a forest, cold, chill, and comfortless—no property in his limbs beneath the knees, where all sensation terminates—and his hands as benumbed as the heart of a poor-law guardian.

If I have never, in all my after life, seen the sun rise from the Rigi, from Snowdon, or the Pic du Midi, or any other place which seems especially made for this sole purpose, I owe it to the experience of this night, and am grateful therefor. Not that I have the most remote notion of throwing disrespect on the glorious luminary—far from it. I cut one of my oldest friends for speaking lightly of the equator; but I hold it that the sun looks best—as every one else does—when he's up and dressed for the day. It's a piece of prying, impertinent curiosity, to peep at him when he's

rising and at his toilet—he has not rubbed the clouds out of his eyes, or you dared not look at him, and you feel it too: the very way you steal out to catch a glimpse, shows the sneaking, contemptible sense you have of your own act. Peeping Tom was a gentleman compared to your early riser.

The whole of which digression simply means to say—I by no means enjoyed the rosy-fingered morning's blushes, the more, for having spent the preceding night in the open air. I need not worry myself, still less my reader, by recapitulating the various frames of mind which succeeded each other every hour of my captivity. At one time, my escape with life served to console me for all I endured; at another, my bondage excited my whole wrath—I vowed vengeance on my persecutors too, and meditated various schemes for their punishment—my anger rising as their absence was prolonged, till I thought I could calculate my indignation by an algebraical formula, and make it exactly equal to the “squares of the distance,” of my persecutors: then I thought of the delight I should experience in regaining my freedom, and actually

made a bold effort to see something ludicrous in the entire adventure—but no; it would not do; I could not summon up a laugh, do all in my power. At last—It might have been towards noon—I heard a merry voice chaunting a song, and a quick step coming up the *allée* of the wood. Never did my heart beat with such delight: the very mode of progression had something joyous in it—it seemed a hop, and a step, and a spring, suiting each motion to the tune of the air—when suddenly the singer, with a long bound, stood before me. It would, indeed, have been a puzzling question which of us more surprised the other: however, as I can render no accurate account of *his* sensations on seeing me, I must content myself with recording mine on beholding him, and the best way to do so is, to describe him:—He was a man, or a boy—Heaven knows which—of something under the middle size, dressed in rags of every colour and shape—his old white hat was crushed and bent into some faint resemblance of a chapeau, and decorated with a cockade of dirty ribands and a cock's feather—a little white jacket, such as men cooks wear in the kitchen, and a pair of flaming

crimson plush shorts, cut above the knee, and displaying his naked legs, with sabots, formed his costume: a wooden sword was attached to an old belt round his waist, an ornament of which he seemed vastly proud, and which from time to time he regarded with no small satisfaction.

"Holloa!" cried he, starting back, as he stood some six paces off, and gazed at me with most unequivocal astonishment; then recovering his self-possession long before I could summon mine, he said—" *Bon jour, bon jour, camarade*—a fine day for the vintage."

"No better," said I; "but come a little nearer, and do me the favour to untie these cords."

"Ah! are you long fastened up there?"

"The whole night," said I, in a lamentable accent, hoping to move his compassion the more speedily.

"What fun," said he, chuckling. "Were there many squirrels about?"

"Thousands of them. But come—be quick and undo this, and I'll tell you all about it"

"Gently, gently," said he, approaching with

great caution about six inches nearer me. "When did the rabbits come out?—Was it before day?"

"Yes, yes, an hour before. But I'll tell you everything when I'm loose. Be alive now, do."

"Why did you tie yourself so fast?" said he, eagerly, but not venturing to come closer.

"Confound the fellow," said I passionately. "I didn't tie myself; it was the—the——"

"Ah! I know—it was the *Maire*, old Pierre Bogout. Well, well, he knows best when you ought to be set free. *Bon Jour*," and with that he began once more his infernal tune, and set out on his way as if nothing had happened; and though I called, prayed, swore, promised, and threatened with all my might, he never turned his head, but went on capering as before, and soon disappeared in the dark wood. For a full hour, passion so completely mastered me, that I could do nothing but revile fools and idiots of every shade and degree— inveighing against mental imbecility as the height of human wickedness, and wondering why no one had ever suggested the propriety of having "naturals" publicly whipped.

I am shocked at myself, now, as I call to mind the extravagance of my anger; and I grieve to say, that had I been, for that short interval the proprietor of a private mad-house, I fear I should have been betrayed to the most unwarrantable cruelties towards the patients; indeed, what is technically called "moral government," would have formed no part of my system.

Meanwhile time was moving on, if not pleasantly, at least steadily; and already the sun began to decline somewhat; and his rays, that before came vertical, were now slanting as they fell upon the wood. For a while, my attention was drawn off from my miseries by watching the weasles as they played and sported about me, in the confident belief that I was at best only a kind of fungus—an excrescence on an oak tree. One of them used to come actually to my feet, and even ran across my instep in his play. Suddenly the thought ran through me—and with terror—how soon may it be thus, and that I shall only be a miserable skeleton, pecked at by crows, and nibbled by squirrels. The idea was too dreadful; and, as if the hour had actually come, I screamed

out to frighten off the little creatures, and sent them back scampering into their dens.

“Holloa there! what’s the matter?” shouted a deep mellow voice from the middle of the wood; and before I could reply, a fat, rosy-cheeked man, of about fifty, with a pleasant countenance terminating in a row of double chins, approached me, but still with evident caution, and halting when about five paces distant, stood still.

“Who are you?” said I, hastily, resolving this time at least, to adopt a different method of effecting my liberation.

“What’s all this?” quoth the fat man, shading his eyes with his palm, and addressing some one behind him, whom I now recognised as my friend the fool who visited me in the morning.

“I say, sir,” repeated I, in a tone of command somewhat absurd from a man in my situation—
“who are you, may I ask?”

“The *Maire* of Givét,” said he, pompously, as he drew himself up, and took a large pinch of snuff with an imposing gravity, while his companion took off his hat in the most reverent fashion, and bowed down to the ground.

“Well, Monsieur le Maire, the better fortune mine to fall into such hands. I have been robbed and fastened here, as you see, by a gang of scoundrels,”—I took good care to say nothing of smugglers—“who have carried away everything I possessed. Have the goodness to loosen these confounded cords, and set me at liberty.”

“Were there many of them?” quoth the *Maire*, without budging a step forward.

“Yes, a dozen at least. But untie me at once—I’m heartily sick of being chained up here.”

“A dozen at least!” repeated he, in an accent of wonderment. “*Ma foi*, a very formidable gang. Do you remember any of their names?”

“Devil take their names! how should I know them? Come, cut these cords, will you? We can talk just as well when I’m free.”

“Not so fast, not so fast,” said he, admonishing me with a bland motion of his hand. “Everything must be done in order. Now, since you don’t know their names, we must put them down as ‘parties unknown.’”

“Put them down whatever you like; but let me loose.”

"All in good time. Let us proceed regularly. Who are your witnesses?"

"Witnesses!" screamed I, overcome with passion.—"You'll drive me distracted. I tell you I was waylaid in the wood by a party of scoundrels, and you ask me for their names, and then for my witnesses. Cut these cords, and don't be so infernally stupid. Come, old fellow, be alive, will you?"

"Softly, softly, don't interrupt public justice;" said he, with a most provoking composure. "We must draw up the *procès verbal*."

"To be sure," said I, endeavouring to see what might be done by concurrence with him—"nothing more natural. But let me loose first; then we'll arrange the *procès*."

"Not at all; you're all wrong," interposed he. "I must have two witnesses first, to establish the fact of your present position—ay, and they must be of sound mind, and able to sign their names."

"May Heaven grant me patience, or I'll burst," said I to myself, while he continued in a regular sing-song tone—

"Then we'll take the depositions in form. Where do you come from?"

“Ireland,” said I, with a deep sigh, wishing I were up to the neck in a bog-hole there, in preference to my actual misfortune.

“What language do you usually speak?”

“English.”

“There now,” said he, brightening up—“there’s an important fact already in the class No. 1, identity, which speaks of ‘all traits, marks, and characteristic signs by which the plaintiff may be known.’ Now we’ll set you forth as ‘an Irishman that speaks English.’”

“If you go on this way a little longer, you may put me down as ‘insane,’ for I vow to Heaven I’m becoming so.”

“Come, Bobeche,” said he, turning towards the natural, who stood in mute admiration at his side—“go over to Claude Gueirans’ at the mill, and see if the ‘*Notaire*’ be up there: there was a marriage of his niece this morning, and I think you’ll find him;—then cross the bridge, and make for Papalot’s, and ask him to come up here, and bring some stamped paper to take informations, with him. You may tell the curé as you go by, that there’s been a dreadful crime committed in

the forest, and that '*la justice s'informe*'"—these last words were pronounced with an accent of the most magniloquent solemnity.

Scarcely had the fool set out on his errand when my temper, so long restrained, burst all bounds, and I abused the *Maire* in the most outrageous manner. There was no insult I could think of I did not heap on his absurdity, his ignorance, his folly, and stupidity; and never ceased till actually want of breath completely exhausted me. To all this, the worthy man made no reply, nor paid even the least attention. Seated on the stump of a beech tree, he looked steadily at vacancy, till at length I began to doubt whether the whole scene were real, and that he was not a mere creature of my imagination. I verily believe I'd have given five *louis d'ors* to have been free one moment, if only to pelt a stone at him. Meanwhile, the shadow of coming night was falling on the forest—the crows came cawing home to their dwelling in the tree-tops—the sounds of insect life were stilled in the grass—and the odours of the forest, stronger as night closed in, filled the air. Gradually, the

darkness grew thicker and thicker, and at last all I could distinguish was the stems of the trees near me, and a massive black object I judged to be the *Maire*.

I called out to him in accents intended to be most apologetic—I begged forgiveness for my warmth of temper—protested my regrets, and only asked for the pleasure of his entertaining society till the hour of my liberation should arrive. But no answer came—not a word, not a syllable in reply; I could not even hear him breathing. Provoked at this uncomplying obstinacy, I renewed my attacks on all constituted authorities—expressed the most lively hopes that the gang of robbers would some day or other burn down Givét and all it contained, not forgetting the *Maire* and the notary; and finally, to fill up the measure of insult, tried to sing the “*ça ira*,” which, in good monarchical Holland, was, I knew, a dire offence; but I broke down in the melody, and had to come back to prose. However, it came just to the same—all was silent. When I ceased speaking, not even an echo returned me a reply. At last I grew wearied—the thought that

all my anathemas had only an audience of weasles and wood-peckers, *damped the ardour of my eloquence, and I fell into a musing fit on Dutch justice, which seemed admirably adapted to those good old times when people lived to the age of eight or nine hundred years, and when a few months were as the twinkling of an eye. Then I began a little plan of a tour from the time of my liberation, cautiously resolving never to move out of the most beaten tracks, and to avoid all districts where the "*Maire*" was a Dutchman. Hunger, and thirst, and cold, by this time began to tell upon my spirits too, and I grew sleepy from sheer exhaustion.

Scarcely had I nodded my head twice in slumber, when a loud shout awoke me. I opened my eyes, and saw a vast mob of men, women, and children, carrying torches, and coming through the wood at full speed—the procession being led by a venerable-looking old man on a white pony, whom I at once guessed to be the curé, while the fool, with a very imposing branch of burning pine, walked beside him.

"Good evening to you, Monsieur," said the old

man, as he took off his hat, with an air of courtesy.

"You must excuse the miserable plight I'm in, Monsieur le Curé," said I, "if I can't return your politeness—but I'm tied."

"Cut the cords at once," said the good man to the crowd that now pressed forward.

"Your pardon, Father Jacques," said the "Maire," as he sat up in the grass and rubbed his eyes, which sleep seemed to have almost obliterated; "but the *procès verbal* is——"

"Quite unnecessary here," replied the old man. "Cut the rope, my friends."

"Not so fast," said the *Maire*, pushing towards me. "I'll untie it. That's a good cord, and worth eight sous."

And so, notwithstanding all my assurances that I'd give him a crown-piece to use more despatch, he proceeded leisurely to unfasten every knot, and took at least ten minutes before he set me at liberty.

"Hurrah," said I, as the last coil was withdrawn, and I attempted to spring into the air, but my cramped and chilled limbs were un-

equal to the effort, and I rolled headlong on the grass.

The worthy curé, however, was at once beside me, and after a few directions to the party to make a litter for me, he knelt down to offer up a short prayer for my deliverance—the rest followed the act with implicit devotion, while I took off my hat in respect, and sat still where I was.

“I see,” whispered he, when the *ave* was over —“I see you are a Protestant. This is a fast day with us, but we'll get you a poulet at my cottage, and a glass of wine will soon refresh you.”

With many a thankful speech, I soon suffered myself to be lifted into a large sheet, such as they use in the vineyards, and with a strong cortège of the villagers, carrying their torches, we took our way back to Givét.

* * * * *

* * * * *

The circumstances of my adventure, considerably exaggerated, of course, were bruited over the country; and before I was out of bed next morning, a chasseur, in a very showy livery, arrived

with a letter from the lord of the manor, entreating me to take my abode for some days at the Château de Rochepied, where I should be received with a perfect welcome, and every endeavour made to recover my lost effects. Having consulted with the worthy curé, who counselled me by all means to accept this flattering invitation—a course I was myself disposed to—I wrote a few lines of answer, and dispatched a messenger by post to Dinant, to bring up my heavy baggage which I had left there.

Towards noon the count's carriage drove up to convey me to the Chateau; and having taken an affectionate farewell of my kind host, I set out for Rochepied. The wicker conveniency in which I travelled, all alone, was, albeit not the thing for Hyde Park, easy and pleasant in its motion; the fat Flemish mares, with their long tails tastefully festooned over a huge cushion of plaited straw on their backs, went at a fair steady pace; the road led through a part of the forest abounding in pretty vistas of woodland scenery; and everything conspired to make me feel that even an affair with a gang of smugglers might not be the worst

thing in life, if it were to lead to such pleasant results afterwards.

As we jogged along, I learned from the fat Walloon coachman, that the Chateau was full of company; the count had invited numerous guests for the opening of the "Chasse," and that there were French, and Germans, and English, and, for aught he knew, Chinese, expected to "assist" at the ceremony. I confess the information considerably damped the pleasure I at first experienced. I was in hopes to see real country life, the regular course of chateau existence, in a family quietly domesticated on their own property. I looked forward to a peep at that "vie intime" of Flemish household, of which all I knew was gathered from a Wenix picture—I wanted to see the thing in reality. The good *Vrouw*, with her high cap and her long waist, her pale features, lit up with eyes of such brown, as only Vandyk ever caught the colour of; and the daughters, prim and stately, with their stiff quaint courtesy, moving about the terraced walks, like figures stepping from an ancient canvas, with bouquets in their white and dimpled fingers, or

mayhap a jesse hawk perched upon their wrist; and then the Mynheer baron—I pictured him as a large and portly Fleming, with a slouched beaver, and a short trim moustache, deep of voice, heavy of step, seated on a grey Cuyp-like horse, with a flowing mane and a huge tassel of a tail, flapping lazily his brawny flanks, or slapping with heavy stroke the massive jack boots of his rider.

Such were my notions of a Dutch household. The unchanged looks of the dwellings, which for centuries were the same, in part suggested these thoughts. The quaint old turrets, the stiff and stately terraces, the fosse, stagnant and sluggish, the carved tracery of the massive doorway, were all as we see them in the oldest pictures of the land; and when the rind looks so like, it is hard to imagine the fruit with a different flavour.

It was then with considerable regret I learned, that I should see the family, *en gala*, that I had fallen upon a time of feasting and entertainment, and had it not been too late, I should have beaten my retreat, and taken up my abode for another day with the Curé of Givét; as it was, I resolved to

make my visit as brief as possible, and take to the road with all convenient despatch.

As we neared the Chateau, the Walloon remembered a number of apologies with which the count charged him to account for his not having gone himself to fetch me, alleging the claims of his other guests, and the unavoidable details which the forthcoming "*ouverture de chasse*" demanded at his hands. I paid little attention to the mumbled and broken narrative, interrupted by imprecations on the road, and exhortations to the horses; for already we had entered the precincts of the demesne, and I was busy in noting down the appearance of the place. There was, however, little to remark; the transition from the wide forest to the park, was only marked by a little improvement in the road; there was neither lodge nor gate—no wall, no fence, no inclosure of any kind. The trim culture, which in our country is so observable around the approach of a house of some consequence, was here totally wanting: the avenue was partly of gravel, partly of smooth turf; the brushwood of prickly holly was let grow wild, and straggled in many places across the

road; the occasional views that opened seemed to have been made by accident, not design: and all was rank vegetation and rich verdure, uncared for—uncultivated; but, like the children of the poor, seeming only the healthier and more robust, because left to their own unchecked, untutored impulses. The rabbits played about within a few paces of the carriage track; the birds sat motionless on the trees as we passed, while here and there, through the foliage, I could detect the gorgeous colouring of some bright peacock's tail, as he rested on a bough and held converse with his wilder brethren of the air, just as if the remoteness of the spot and its seclusions, led to intimacies, which in the ordinary routine of life had been impossible. At length the trees receded farther and farther from the road, and a beautiful expanse of waving lawn, dotted with sheep, stretched before the eye; in the distance, too, I could perceive the Chateau itself—a massive pile in the shape of a letter L, bristling with chimneys, and pierced with windows of every size and shape; clumps of flowering shrubs and fruit trees were planted about, and little beds of flowers spangled

the even turf like stars in the expanse of heaven. The Meuse wound round the Chateau on three sides, and perhaps thus saved it from being inflicted by a ditch—for without water a Dutchman can no more exist than a mackerel.

“Fine! isn’t it?” said the Walloon, as he pointed with his finger to the scene before me, and seemed to revel with delight in my look of astonishment, while he plied his whip with renewed vigour, and soon drew up at a wide flight of stone steps, where a row of orange trees mounted guard on either side, and filled the place with their fragrance.

A servant in a strange *melange* of a livery, where the colours seemed chosen from a bed of ranunculuses just near, came out to let down the steps, and usher me into the house. He informed me that the count had given orders for my reception, but that he and all his friends were out on horseback, and would not be back before dinner time. Not sorry to have a little time to myself, I retired to my room, and threw myself down on a most comfortable sofa, excessively well satisfied with the locality, and well disposed

to take advantage of my good fortune. The little bed, with its snow-white curtains and gilded canopy; the brass dogs upon the hearth, that shone like gold; the cherry-wood table, that might have served as a mirror; the modest bookshelf, with its pleasant row of volumes; but, better than all, the open window, from which I could see for miles over the tops of a dark forest, and watch the Meuse as it came and went, now shining, now lost in the recesses of the wood—all charmed me: and I fully confessed, what I have had very frequently to repeat in life, that “Arthur O’Leary was born under a lucky planet.”

CHAPTER XII.

A FRAGMENT OF CHATEAU LIFE.

STRETCHED upon a large old-fashioned sofa, where a burgomaster might have reclined with "ample room and verge enough," in all the easy abandonment of dressing-gown and slippers—the cool breeze gently wafting the window-blind to and fro, and tempering the lulling sounds from wood and water—the buzzing of the summer insects, and the far-off carol of a peasant's song—I fell into one of those delicious sleeps in which dreams are so faintly marked, as to leave us no disappointment on waking: flitting, shadow-like, before the mind, they live only in a pleasant memory of something vague and undefined; and impart no touch of sorrow for expectations unfulfilled—for hopes that are not to be realized. I would that my dreams might always take this shape. It is a sad thing when they become

tangible—when features and looks, eyes, hands, words, and sighs, live too strongly in our sleeping minds—and that we awake to the cold reality of our daily cares and crosses, tenfold less endurable from very contrast. No! give me rather the faint and waving outline—the shadowy perception of pleasure, than the vivid picture, to end only in the conviction that I am but Christopher Sly after all; or what comes pretty much to the same, nothing but—Arthur O'Leary.

Still, I would not have you deem me discontented with my lot; far from it. I chose my path early in life, and never saw reason to regret the choice. How many of you can say as much? I felt that while the tender ties of home and family—the charities that grow up around the charmed circle of a wife and children—are the great prizes of life; there are also a thousand lesser ones in the wheel, in the kindly sympathies with which the world abounds; that to him who bears no ill will at his heart, nay, rather loving all things that are loveable, with warm attachments to all who have been kind to him, with strong sources of happiness in his own

tranquil thoughts, the wandering life would offer many pleasures.

Most men live, as it were, with one story of their lives, the traits of childhood maturing into manly features; their history consists of the development of early character in circumstances of good or evil fortune. They fall in love, they marry, they grow old, and they die—each incident of their existence bearing on that before and that after, like link upon link of some great chain. He, however, who throws himself like a plank upon the waters, to be washed hither and thither, as wind or tide might drive him, has a very different experience. To him, life is a succession of episodes, each perfect in itself; the world is but a number of tableaux, changing with climate and country; his sorrows in France have no connexion with his joys in Italy; his delights in Spain live apart from his griefs on the Rhine. The past throws no shadow on the future—his philosophy is, to make the most of the present; and he never forgets La Bruyère's maxim—"Il faut rire avant d'être heureux, *de peur de mourir sans avoir ri.*"

Now, if you don't like my philosophy, set it down as a dream, and here I am awake once more.

And certainly I claim no great merit on the score of my vigilance; for the tantararara that awoke me, would have aroused the seven sleepers themselves. Words are weak to convey the most distant conception of the noise: it seemed as though ten thousand peacocks had congregated beneath my window, and with brazen throats were bent on giving me a hideous concert. The fiend-chorus in "Robert le Diable" was a psalm-tune compared to it. I started up and rushed to the casement; and there, in the lawn beneath, beheld some twenty persons costumed in hunting fashion—their horses foaming and splashed, their coats stained with marks of the forest; but the uproar was soon comprehensible, owing to some half dozen of the party who performed on that most diabolical of all human inventions, the *cor de chasse*.

Imagine, if you can, and thank your stars that it is only a work of imagination, some twenty feet of brass pipe, worn belt-fashion over one

shoulder, and under the opposite arm—one end of the aforesaid tube being a mouth-piece, and the other expanding itself into a huge trumpet-mouth; then conceive a Fleming—one of Rubens' cherubs, immensely magnified, and decorated with a beard and moustaches—blowing into this, with all the force of his lungs, perfectly unmindful of the five other performers, who at five several and distinct parts of the melody, are blasting away also; treble and bass, contre alto and soprano, shake and sostenuto—all blending into one crash of hideous discord, to which the Scotch bagpipe, in a pibroch, is a soothing, melting melody. A deaf and dumb institution would capitulate in half an hour. Truly, the results of a hunting expedition ought to be of the most satisfactory kind, to make the "*retour de chasse*"—it was this they were blowing—at all sufferable to those who were not engaged in the concert; as for the performers, I can readily believe they never heard a note of the whole.

Even Dutch lungs grow tired at last; having blown the establishment into ecstasies, and myself into a furious headache, they gave in; and

ARTHUR O'LEARY.

now an awful bell announced the time to dress for dinner. While I made my toilet, I endeavoured, as well as my throbbing temples would permit me, to fancy the host's personal appearance, and to conjecture the style of the rest of the party. My preparations over, I took a parting look in the glass, as if to guess the probable impression I should make below stairs, and sallied forth.

Cautiously stealing along over the well-waxed floors, slippery as ice itself, I descended the broad oak stair into a great hall, wainscotted with dark walnut, and decorated with antlers and stags' heads, cross-bows, and arquebusses, and, to my shuddering horror, various *cors de chasse*, now happily, however, silent on the walls. I entered the drawing-room, conning over to my a little speech in French, and preparing myself to bow for the next fifteen minutes; but to my surprise, no one had yet appeared. All were still occupied dressing, and probably taking some well-merited repose after their exertions on the wind instruments. I had now time for a survey of the apartment; and, generally speaking, a

drawing-room is no bad indication of the tastes and temperament of the owners of the establishment.

The practised eye speedily detects in the character and arrangement of a chamber, something of its occupant. In some houses, the absence of all decoration—the simple puritanism of the furniture, bespeaks the life of quiet souls, whose days are as devoid of luxury as their dwellings. You read in the cold grey tints, the formal stiffness, the unrelieved regularity around, the Quaker-like flatness of their existence. In others, there is an air of ill-done display, a straining after effect, which shows itself in costly, but ill-assorted details—a mingling of all styles and eras, without repose or keeping. The bad pretentious pictures, the faulty bronzes, meagre casts of poor originals, the gaudy china, are safe warranty for the vulgarity of their owners; while the humble parlour of a village inn can be, as I have seen it, made to evidence the cultivated tastes and polished habits, of those who have made it the halting-place of a day. We might go back and trace how much of our knowledge of the earliest ages, is derivable

from the study of the interior of their dwellings ; what a rich volume of information is conveyed in a mosaic ; what a treatise does not lie in a frescoed wall.

The room in which I now found myself was a long, and for its length, a narrow apartment ; a range of tall windows, deeply sunk in the thick wall, occupied one side, opposite to which was a plain wall, covered with pictures from floor to cornice, save where, at a considerable distance from each other, were two splendidly-carved chimney-pieces of black oak, one representing "The Adoration of the Shepherds," and the other, "The Miraculous Draught of Fishes,"—the latter done with a relief, a vigour, and a movement, I have never seen equalled. Above these, were some armorial trophies of an early date, in which, among the maces and battle-axes, I could recognise some weapons of Eastern origin, which, by the family, I learned, were ascribed to the periods of the Crusades.

Between the windows, were placed a succession of carved oak cabinets of the seventeenth century, beautiful specimens of art ; and for all their

quaintness, far handsomer objects of furniture than our modern luxury has introduced among us. Japan vases of dark-blue and green were filled with rare flowers; here and there small tables of costly Buhl invited you to the window recesses, where the downy ottomans, pillowed with Flemish luxury, suggested rest, if not sleep. The pictures, over which I could but throw a passing glance, were all by Flemish painters, and of that character which so essentially displays their chief merits, richness of colour and tone—Gerard Dow and Ostade, Cuyp, Vander-Meer, and Terburg; those admirable groupings of domestic life, where the nation is, as it were, miniaturized before you; that perfection of domestic quiet, which bespeaks an heir-loom of tranquillity, derived whole centuries back. You see at once in those dark-brown eyes and placid features, the traits that have taken ages to bring to such perfection; and you recognise the origin of those sturdy burgomasters and bold burghers, who were at the same time the thriftiest merchants, and the haughtiest princes, of Europe.

Suddenly, and when I was almost on my knees

to examine a picture by Memling, the door opened, and a small, sharp-looking man, dressed in the last extravagance of Paris mode, resplendent in waistcoat, and glistening in jewellery, tripped lightly forward. "Ah, mi Lor O'Leary!" said he, advancing towards me with a bow and a slide.

It was no time to discuss pedigree; so gulping the promotion, I made my acknowledgments as best I could: and by the time that we met, which, on a moderate calculation, might have been two minutes after he entered, we shook hands very cordially, and looked delighted to see each other. This ceremony, I repeat, was only accomplished after his having bowed round two tables, an ottoman, and an oak "armoire," I having performed the like ceremony behind a Chinese screen, and very nearly over a vase of the original "green dragon," which actually seemed disposed to spring at me for my awkwardness.

Before my astonishment, shall I add disappointment, had subsided, at finding that the diminutive, over-dressed figure before me, was the representative of those bold barons I had been

musings over, for such he was, the room began to fill. Portly ladies of undefined dates, sailed in and took their places—stiff, stately, and silent as their grandmothers on the walls; heavy-looking gentlemen, with unpronounceable names, bowed and wheeled, and bowed again; while a buzz of “*votre serviteur*,” Madame or Monsieur, swelled and sank amid the murmur of the room, with the scraping of feet on the glazed *parquet*, and the rustle of silk, whose plentitude bespoke a day when silkworms were honest.

The host paraded me around the austere circle, where the very names sounded like an incantation; and the old ladies shook their bugles and agitated their fans, in recognition of my acquaintance. The circumstances of my adventure were the conversation of every group; and although I confess, I could not help feeling, that even a small spice of malice might have found food for laughter in the absurdity of my *durance*, yet not one there could see anything in the whole affair, save a grave case of smuggled tobacco, and a most unwarrantable exercise of authority on the part of the *curé* who liberated me. Indeed, this latter

seemed to gain ground so rapidly, that once or twice I began to fear they might remand me, and sentence me to another night in the air, "till justice should be satisfied." I did the worthy *Maire de Givét* foul wrong, said I to myself; these people here are not a whit better.

The company continued to arrive at every moment; and now I remarked that it was the veteran battalion who led the march, the younger members of the household only dropping in as the hour grew later. Among these was a pleasant sprinkling of Frenchmen, as easily recognizable among Flemings, as is an officer of the "Blues" from one of the new police. A German baron, a very portrait of his class—fat, heavy-browed, sulky-looking, but in reality a good-hearted, fine-tempered fellow; two Americans; an English colonel, with his daughters twain; and a Danish *chargé d'affaires*—the minor characters being what, in dramatic phrase, are called *premiers* and *premierès*, meaning thereby young people of either sex, dressed in the latest mode, and performing the part of lovers. The ladies, with a moderate share of good looks, being perfect in the freshness

of their toilette, and a certain air of ease and gracefulness, almost universal abroad; the men, a strange mixture of silliness and savagery—a bad cross—half hairdresser, half hero.

Before the dinner was announced, I had time to perceive that the company was divided into two different and very opposite currents—one party consisting of the old Dutch or Flemish race, quiet, plodding, peaceable souls, pretending to nothing new, enjoying everything old; their souvenirs referring to some event in the time of their grandfathers: the other section were the younger portion, who, strongly imbued with French notions on dress, and English on sporting matters, attempted to bring Newmarket and the “Boulevards des Italiens” into the heart of the Ardennes.

Between the two, and connecting them with each other, was a species of *pont du diable*, in the person of a little, dapper, olive-complexioned man of about forty; his eyes black as jet, but with an expression soft and subdued, save at moments of excitement, when they flashed like glow-worms; his plain suit of black, with deep cambric ruffles;

his silk shorts and buckled shoes, had something of the ecclesiastic—and so it was: he was the Abbé van Praet, the cadet of an ancient Belgian family, a man of considerable ability, highly informed on most subjects—a linguist, a musician, a painter of no small pretensions, who spent his life in the “*far niente*” of chateau existence: now devising a party of pleasure, now inventing a madrigal—now giving directions to the *chef* how to make an *omelette à la curé*, now stealing noiselessly along some sheltered walk, to hear some fair lady’s secret confidence, for he was privy counsellor in all affairs of the heart; and if the world did not wrong him, occasionally pleaded his own cause, when no other petitioner offered.

I was soon struck by this man, and by the tact with which, while he preserved his ascendancy over the minds of all, he never admitted any undue familiarity, yet affected all the ease and *insouciance* of the veriest idler. I was flattered, also, by his notice of me, and by the politeness of his invitation to sit next him at table.

The distinctions I have hinted at already, made the dinner conversation a strange medley of

Flemish history and sporting anecdotes—of reminiscences of the times of Maria Theresa—and dissertations on weights and ages—of the genealogies of Flemish families, and the pedigrees of English race-horses. The young English ladies, both pretty and delicate-looking girls, with an air of good breeding and tone in their manner, shocked me not a little by the intimate knowledge they displayed on all matters of the turf and the stable; their acquaintance with the details of hunting, racing, and steeple-chasing, seeming to form the most wonderful attraction to the moustached counts and whiskered barons, who listened to them. The colonel was a fine mellow-looking old gentleman, with a white head and a red nose, and with that species of placid expression one sees in the people who perform those parts in Vaudeville theatres, called *pères nobles*; he seemed, indeed, as if he had been daily in the habit of bestowing a lovely daughter on some happy, enraptured lover, and invoking a blessing on their heads. There was a rich unction in his voice, an almost imperceptible quaver, that made it seem kind and affectionate; he

finished his shake of the hand with a little parting squeeze, a kind of "one cheer more," as they say now-a-days, when some misguided admirer calls upon a meeting for enthusiasm they don't feel. The Americans were—and one description will serve for both, so like were they—sallow, high-boned, silent men, with a species of quiet caution in their manner, as if they were learning, but had not yet completed, a European education, as to habits and customs; and were studiously careful not to commit any solecisms which might betray their country.

As dinner proceeded, the sporting characters carried the day. The "ouverture de chasse," which was to take place the following morning, was an all-engrossing topic, and I found myself established as judge on a hundred points of English jockey etiquette, of which as my ignorance was complete, I suffered grievously in the estimation of the company, and when referred to, could neither apportion the weight to age, nor even tell the number of yards in a "distance."

It was, however, decreed that I should ride the next day—the host had the "very horse to suit

me"—and, as the abbé whispered me to consent, I acceded at once to the arrangement.

When we adjourned to the drawing-room, Colonel Muddleton came towards me with an easy smile and an outstretched snuff-box, both in such perfect keeping, the action was a finished thing.

"Any relation, may I ask, of a very old friend and brother officer of mine, General Mark O'Leary, who was killed in Canada?" said he.

"A very distant one only," replied I.

"A capital fellow, brave as a lion, and pleasant. By Jove, I never met the like of him. What became of his Irish property?—he never was married, I think."

"No, he died a bachelor, and left his estates to my uncle—they had met once by accident, and took a liking to each other."

"And so your uncle has them now?"

"No, my uncle died since—they came into my possession some two or three years ago."

"Eh—ah—upon my life," said he, with something of surprise in his manner, and then, as if ashamed of his exclamation, and with a much

more cordial vein than at first, he resumed—
“What a piece of unlooked-for good fortune, to be sure—only think of my finding my old friend Mark’s nephew.”

“Not his nephew. I was only——”

“Never mind, never mind; he was a kind of an uncle, you know; any man might be proud of him. What a glorious fellow; full of fun; full of spirit and animation. Ah, just like all your countrymen—I’ve a little Irish blood in my veins myself; my mother was an O’Flaherty, or an O’Neil, or something of that sort; and there’s Laura—you don’t know my daughter?”

“I have not the honour.”

“Come along, and I’ll introduce you to her—a little reserved or so,” said he, in a whisper, as if to give me the *carte du pays*—“rather cold, you know, to strangers—but when she hears you are the nephew of my old friend Mark——Mark and I were like brothers. Laura, my love,” said he, tapping the young lady on her white shoulder, as she stood with her back towards us. “Laura, dear, the son of my oldest friend in the world, General O’Leary.” The young lady turned.

quickly round, and, as she drew herself up somewhat haughtily, dropped me a low curtsey, and then resumed her conversation with a very much whiskered gentleman near.

The colonel seemed, despite all his endeavours to overcome it, rather put out by his daughter's hauteur to the *son* of his old friend; and what he should have said or done I know not, when the abbé came suddenly up, and with a card invited me to join a party at whist. The moment was so awkward for all, that I would have accepted an invitation even to *ecarté*, to escape from the difficulty, and I followed him into a small boudoir where two ladies were awaiting us. I had just time to see that they were both pleasing-looking, and of that time of life when women, without forfeiting any of the attractions of youth, are much more disposed to please by the attractions of manner and *esprit*, than by mere beauty; when we sat down to our game. La Baronne de Meer, my partner, was the younger and the prettier of the two; she was one of those Flemings into whose families the race of Spain poured the warm current of southern blood, and gave them the dark

eye and the olive skin, the graceful figure and the elastic step, so characteristic of their nation.

"*A la bonne heure,*" said she, smiling, "have we rescued one from the enchantress?"

"Yes," replied the abbé, with an affected gravity, "in another moment he was lost."

"If you mean me," said I, laughing, "I assure you I ran no danger whatever; for whatever the young lady's glances may portend, she seemed very much indisposed to bestow a second on me."

The game proceeded with its running fire of chit-chat, in which I could gather, that Mademoiselle Laura was a most established man-killer, no one ever escaping her fascinations, save when by some strange fatality they preferred her sister Julia, whose style was, to use the abbé's phrase, her sister's "diluted."

There was a tone of pique in the way the ladies criticised the colonel's daughters, which, since that, I have often remarked in those who, accustomed to the attentions of men themselves, without any unusual effort to please on their part, are doubly annoyed when they perceive a rival

making more than ordinary endeavours to attract admirers. They feel as a capitalist would, when another millionaire offers money at a lower rate of interest. It is, as it were, a breach of conventional etiquette, and never escapes being severely criticised.

As for me, I had no personal feeling at stake, and looked on at the game of all parties with much amusement.

"Where is the Count D'Espagne to-night," said the baronne to the abbé,—“has he been false?”

“Not at all, he was singing with mademoiselle when I was in the *salon*.”

“You'll have a dreadful rival there, Monsieur O'Leary,” said she, laughingly: “he is the most celebrated swordsman, and the best shot in Flanders.”

“It is likely he may rust his weapons if he have no opportunity for their exercise till I give it,” said I.

“Don't you admire her then?” said she.

“The lady is very pretty, indeed,” said I.

“The heart led,” interrupted the abbé, sud-

denly, as he touched my foot beneath the table—"play a heart."

Close beside my chair, and leaning over my cards, stood Mademoiselle Laura herself at the moment.

"You have no heart," said she, in English, and with a singular expression on the words, while her downcast eye shot a glance, one glance, through me.

"Yes, but I have though," said I, discovering a card that lay concealed behind another—"it only requires a little looking for."

"Not worth the trouble, perhaps," said she, with a toss of her head, as I threw the deuce upon the table, and before I could reply she was gone.

"I think her much prettier when she looks saucy," said the baronne, as if to imply that the air of pique assumed was a mere piece of acting got up for effect.

I see it all, said I to myself. Foreign women can never forgive English, for being so much their superior in beauty and loveliness. Meanwhile

our game came to a close, and we gathered around the buffét.

There we found the old colonel, with a large silver tankard of mulled wine, holding forth over some campaigning exploit, to which no one listened for more than a second or two, and thus the whole room became joint-stock hearers of his story. Laura stood eating her ice with the Count D'Espagne, the black-whiskered cavalier, already mentioned, beside her. The Americans were prosing away about Jefferson and Adams. The Belgians talked agriculture and genealogy; and the French collecting into a group of their own, in which nearly all the pretty women joined, discoursed the ballet, the "Chambre," the court, the coulisses, the last mode, and the last murder, and all in the same mirthful and lively tone. And truly, let people condemn as they will, this superficial style of conversation, there is none equal to it. It avoids the prosaic flatness of German, and the monotonous pertinacity of English, which seems more to partake of the nature of discussion, than dialogue. French chit-chat

takes a wider range ; anecdotic, illustrative, and discursive by turns. It deems nothing too light, nothing too weighty for its subject. It is a gay butterfly, now floating with gilded wings above you—now tremulously perched upon a leaf below—now sparkling in the sunbeam—now loitering in the shade: embodying not only thought, but expression, it charms by its style, as well as by its matter. The language, too, suggests shades and “nuances” of colouring, that exist not in other tongues—you can give to your canvas the precise tint you wish, for when mystery would prove a merit, the equivoque is there ready to your hand, that means so much, yet asserts so little. For my part I should make my will in English, but I’d rather make love in French. But while thus digressing, I have forgotten to mention, that people are running back and forward with bed-room candles ; there is a confused hum of *bon soir* on every side, and with many a hope of a fine day for the morrow, we separate for the night.

I lay awake some hours thinking of Laura, and then of the baronne—they were both arch ones ;

the abbé too crossed my thoughts, and once or twice the old colonel's roguish leer; but I slept soundly for all that, and did not awake till eight o'clock the next morning. The silence of the house struck me forcibly as I rubbed my eyes and looked about. Hang it, thought I, have they gone off to the *chasse* without me? I surely could never have slept through the uproar of their trumpets. I drew aside the window curtains, and the mystery was solved: such rain never fell before; the clouds, actually touching the tops of the beech trees, seemed to ooze and squash like squeezed sponges. The torrent came down in that plashing stroke as if some force behind momentarily propelled it stronger; and the long-parched ground seethed and smoked like a heated cauldron. Pleasant this, was reflection number one, as I endeavoured to peer through the mist, and beheld a haze of weeping foliage. Pleasant to be immured here during heaven knows how many days, without the power to escape. Lucky fellow, Arthur, was my second thought, capital quarters you have fallen into: better far the snug comforts of a Flemish chateau

than the chances of a wayside inn; besides, here is a goodly company met together, there will needs be pleasant people among them. I wish it may rain these three weeks; chateau life is the very thing I'm curious about—how do they get through the day? There's no "Times" in Flanders—no one cares a farthing about who's in and who's out; there's no "Derby," no trials for murder: what can they do? was the question I put to myself a dozen times over. No matter, I have abundant occupation—my journal has never been posted up since—since—alas, I can scarcely tell!

It might be from reflections like these, or perhaps because I was less of a sportsman than my companions, but certainly whatever the cause, I bore up against the disappointment of the weather with far more philosophy, and dispersed a sack of proverbs about patience, hope, equanimity, and contentment, Sancho Panza himself might have envied, until at length no one ventured a malediction on the day in my presence, for fear of eliciting a hail-storm of moral reflections. The company dropped down to breakfast by detach-

ments. The elated looks and flashing eyes of the night before, saddened and overcast at the unexpected change. Even the elders of the party seemed discontented; and except myself and an old gentleman with the gout, who took an airing about the hall and the drawing-room in a wheel-chair, all seemed miserable.

Each window had its occupant posted against the glass, vainly endeavouring to catch one bit of blue, amid the dreary waste of cloud. A little group, sulky and silent, were gathered around the weather-glass; a literary inquirer sat down to con over the predictions of the almanac;—but you might as well have looked for sociability among the inhabitants of a private madhouse as here. The weather was cursed in every language from Cherokee to Sanscrit; all agreed that no country had such an abominable climate. The Yankee praised the summers of America, the Dane upheld his own, and I took a patriotic turn, and vowed I had never seen such rain in Ireland! The master of the house could scarcely show amid this torrent of abusive criticism, and when he did by chance appear, looked as much ashamed as

though he himself had pulled out the spigot, and deluged the whole land with water.

Meanwhile, none of those I looked for appeared. Neither the colonel's daughter nor the baronne came down; the abbé, too, did not descend to the breakfast room, and I was considerably puzzled and put out by the disappointment.

After then enduring a good hour's boredom from the old colonel on the subject of my late lamented parent, Mark O'Leary; after submitting to a severe cross-examination from the Yankee gentlemen as to the reason of my coming abroad, what property and expectations I had, my age, and birth-place, what my mother died of, and whether I did not feel very miserable from the abject slavery of submitting to an English government—I escaped into the library, a fine comfortable old room, which I rightly conjectured I should find unoccupied.

Selecting a quaint-looking quarto with some curious illuminated pages for my companion, drew a great deep leather chair into a recess of one window, and hugged myself in my solitude. While I listlessly turned over the leaves of my

book, or sat sunk in reflection, time crept over, and I heard the great clock of the Chateau strike three at the same moment a hand fell lightly on my shoulder; I turned about—it was the abbé.

“I half suspected I should find you here,” said he. “Do I disturb you, or may I keep your company?”

“But too happy,” I replied, “if you’ll do me the favour.”

“I thought,” said he, as he drew a chair opposite to me—“I thought you’d scarcely play dominoes all day, or turn over the *Livre des Modes*, or discuss waistcoats.”

“In truth, I was scarcely better employed—this old volume here which I took down for its plates-”

“*Ma foi*, a most interesting one; it is Guchardi’s History of Mary of Burgundy. Those quaint old processions, those venerable councils, are admirably depicted. What rich stores for a romance writer lie in the details of these old books;—their accuracy as to costume, the little traits of every-day life so *naïvely* told; every little

domestic incident is so full of its characteristic era. I wonder when the springs are so accessible, men do not draw more frequently from them, and more purely also."

"You forget Scott."

"No; far from it. He is the great exception; and from his intimate acquaintance with this class of reading, is he so immeasurably superior to all other writers of his style. Not merely tinctured, but deeply imbued with the habits of the feudal period; the traits by which others attempt to paint the time, with him were mere accessories in the picture; costume and architecture he used, to heighten, not to convey his impressions; and while no one knew better every minute particular of dress, or arm, that betokened a period or a class, none more sparingly used such aid. He felt the same delicacy certain ancient artists did as to the introduction of pure white into their pictures, deeming such an unfair exercise of skill——But why venture to speak of your countryman to you, save that genius is above nationality, and Scott's novels at least are European."

After chatting for some time longer, and feeling

struck with the extent and variety of the abbé's attainments, I half dropped a hint expressive of my surprise that one so cultivated as he was, could apparently so readily comply with the monotonous routine of a chateau life, and the little prospect it afforded of his meeting congenial associates.

Far from feeling offended at the liberty of my remark, he replied at once with a smile—

“ You are wrong there, and the error is a common one ; but when you have seen more of life, you will learn that a man's own resources are the only real gratifications he can count upon. Society, like a field-day, may offer the occasion to display your troops and put them through their manœuvres, but, believe me, it is a rare and a lucky day when you go back richer by one recruit, and the chance is, that even he is a cripple and must be sent about his business. People, too, will tell you much of the advantage to be derived from associating with men of distinguished and gifted minds: I have seen something of such in my time, and give little credit to the theory. You might as well hope to obtain credit for a

thousand pounds, because you took off your hat to a banker."

The abbé paused after this, and seemed to be occupied with his own thoughts; then raising his head suddenly, he said—

"As to happiness, believe me, it lives only in the extremes of perfect vacuity, or true genius. Your clever fellow, with a vivid fancy and glowing imagination, strong feeling, and strong power of expression, has no chance of it. The excitement he lives in, is alone a bar to the tranquil character of thought necessary to happiness, and however cold a man may feel he should never warm himself through a burning glass."

There seemed through all he said something like a retrospective tone, as though he were rather giving the fruit of past personal experiences, than merely speculating on the future, and I could not help throwing out a hint to this purport.

"Perhaps you are right," said he; then after a long silence he added—"It is a fortunate thing after all, when the faults of a man's temperament are the source of some disappointment in early life; because then they rarely endanger his subse-

quent career. Let him only escape the just punishment, whatever it be, and the chances are, they embitter every hour of his after-life; his whole care and study being not correction, but concealment, he lives a life of daily duplicity; the fear of detection is over him at every step he takes, and he plays a part so constantly that he loses all real character at last in the frequency of dissimulation. Shall I tell you a little incident with which I became acquainted in early life? If you have nothing better to do—it may wile away the hours before dinner.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ABBE'S STORY.

WITHOUT tiring you with any irrelevant details of the family and relatives of my hero, if I dare call him such, I may mention that he was the second son of an old Belgian family of some rank and wealth, and that in accordance with the habits of his house, he was educated for the career of diplomacy; for this purpose, a life of travel was deemed the best preparation—foreign languages being the chief requisite, with such insight into history, national law, and national usages, as any young man with moderate capacity and assiduity, can master in three or four years.

“The chief of the Dutch mission at Frankfort was an old diplomate of some distinction, but who, had it not been from causes purely personal towards the king, would not have quitted the Hague for any embassy whatever. He was a

widower with an only daughter, one of those true types of Dutch beauty which Terburg was so fond of painting. There are people who can see nothing but vulgarity in the class of features I speak of, and yet nothing in reality is farther from it. Hers was a mild, placid face, a wide, candid-looking forehead, down either side of which two braids of sunny brown hair fell; her skin, fair as alabaster, had the least tinge of colour, but her lips were full, and of a violet hue, that gave a character of brilliancy to the whole countenance; her figure, inclined to *embon-point*, was exquisitely moulded, and in her walk there appeared the composed and resolute carriage of one whose temperament, however mild and unruffled, was still based on principles too strong to be shaken. She was indeed a perfect specimen of her nation, embodying in her character the thrift, the propriety, the high sense of honour, the rigid habits of order, so eminently Dutch; but withal there ran through her nature the golden thread of romance, and beneath that mild eyebrow there were the thoughts and hopes of a highly imaginative mind.

“The mission consisted of an old secretary of embassy, Van Dohein, a veteran diplomate of some sixty years, and Edward Norvins, the youth I speak of. Such was the family party, for you are aware that they all lived in the same house, and dined together every day; the *attachés* of the mission being specially entrusted to the care and attention of the head of the mission, as if they were his own children. Norvins soon fell in love with the pretty Marguerite—how could it be otherwise? they were constantly together; he was her companion at home, her attendant at every ball; they rode out together, walked, read, drew, and sang together, and in fact very soon became inseparable. In all this there was nothing which gave rise to remark. The intimate habits of a mission permitted such, and as her father, deeply immersed in affairs of diplomacy, had no time to busy himself about them, no one else did. The secretary had followed the same course at every mission for the first ten years of his career, and only deemed it the ordinary routine of an *attaché's* life.

“Such then was the pleasant current of their

lives, when an event occurred which was to disturb its even flow, ay, and alter the channel for ever. A despatch arrived one morning at the mission, informing them that a certain Monsieur van Halsdt, a son of one of the ministers, who had lately committed some breach of discipline in a cavalry regiment, and was broke in consequence, was about to be attached to the mission. Never was such a shock, as this gave Marguerite and her lover. To her the idea of associating with a wild, unruly character like this, was insupportable: to him it was misery; he saw at once all his daily intimacy with her interrupted; he perceived how their former habits could no longer be followed, that with his arrival must cease the companionship that made him the happiest of men. Even the baron himself was indignant at the arrangement to saddle him with a "*vaurien*" to be reclaimed—but then he was the minister's son: the king himself had signed the appointment, and there was no help for it.

"It was indeed with anything but feelings of welcome they awaited the coming of the new guest. Even in the short interval between his

appointment and his coming, a hundred rumours reached them of his numerous scrapes and adventures, his duels, his debts, his gambling, and his love exploits. All of course duly magnified. Poor Marguerite felt as though an imp of Satan was about to pay them a visit, and Norvins dreaded him with a fear that partook of a presentiment.

“The day came, and the dinner hour, in respect for the son of the great man, was delayed twenty minutes in expectation of his coming, and they went to table at last without him, silent and sad. The baron, annoyed at the loss of dignity he should sustain by a piece of politeness exercised without result; the secretary fretting over the *entrées* that were burned: Marguerite and Edward mourning over happiness never to return—suddenly a calèche drove into the court at full gallop, the steps rattled, and a figure, wrapped in a cloak, sprang out: before the first surprise permitted them to speak, the door of the *salle* opened, and he appeared.

“It would, I confess, have been a difficult matter to have fixed on that precise character of looks and appearances which might have

pleased all the party. Whatever were the sentiments of others I know not, but Norvins' wishes would have inclined to see him short and ill-looking, rude in speech and gesture—in a word, as repulsive as possible. It is indeed a strange thing—you must have remarked it I'm certain: the disappointment we feel at finding people we desire to like, inferior to our own conceptions of them, is not one-half so great, as is our chagrin at discovering those we are determined to dislike, very different from our preconceived notions, with few or none of the features we were prepared to find fault with, and, in fact, altogether unlike the bugbear we had created for ourselves. One would suppose that such a revulsion in feeling would be pleasurable rather than otherwise. Not so, however; a sense of our own injustice adds poignancy to our previous prejudice, and we dislike the object only the more for lowering us in our own esteem.

“Van Halsdt was well calculated to illustrate my theory. He was tall and well made; his face, dark as a Spaniard's—his mother was descended from a Catalonian family—was manly-

looking and frank, at once indicating openness of temperament, and a dash of heroic daring, that would like danger for itself alone; his carriage had the easy freedom of a soldier, without anything bordering on coarseness or effrontery. Advancing with a quiet bow, he tendered his apologies for being late, rather as a matter he owed to himself, to excuse his want of punctuality, than from any sense of inconvenience to others, and ascribed the delay to the difficulty of finding post-horses—‘While waiting, therefore,’ said he, ‘I resolved to economise time, and so dressed for dinner at the last stage.’

“This apology at least showed a desire on his part to be in time, and at once disposed the secretary in his favour. The baron himself spoke little, and as for Marguerite, she never opened her lips to him the whole time of dinner, and Norvins could barely get out the few common-places of table, and sat eyeing him from time to time with an increasing dislike.

“Van Haldst could not help feeling that his reception was of the coldest; yet either perfectly indifferent to the fact, or resolved to overcome

their impressions against him, he talked away unceasingly of everything he could think of—the dinners at court, the theatres, the diplomatic *soirées*, the news from foreign countries—all of which he spoke of with knowledge and intimacy. Yet nothing could he extract in return. The old baron retired, as was his wont, immediately after dinner; the secretary dropped off soon after; Marguerite went to take her evening drive on the Boulevards; and Norvins was left alone with his new comrade. At first he was going to pretend an engagement, then the awkwardness of the moment came forcibly before him, and he sat still, silent and confused.

“‘Any wine in that decanter?’ said Van Halsdt, with a short abrupt tone, as he pointed to the bottle beside him. ‘Pray pass it over here. I have only drank three glasses. I shall be better aware to-morrow how soon your party breaks up here.’

“‘Yes,’ said Edward timidly, and not well knowing what to say. ‘The baron retires to his study every evening at seven.’

“‘With all my heart,’ said he gaily; ‘at six

if he prefer it, and he may even take the old secretary with him. But the mademoiselle, shall we see any more of her during the evening—is there no *salon*? Eh, what do you do after dinner?’

“ ‘Why sometimes we drive, or we walk out on the Boulevards; the other ministers receive once or twice a week, and then there’s the opera.’

“ ‘Devilishly slow you must find all this,’ said Van Halsdt, filling a bumper, and taking it off at a draught. ‘Are you long here?’

“ ‘Only three months.’

“ ‘And well sick of it, I’ll be sworn.’

“ ‘No, I feel very happy—I like the quiet.—

“ ‘Oh dear! oh dear!’ said he, with a long groan, ‘what is to become of *me*?’

“ Norvins heartily wished he could have replied to the question in the way he would have liked, but said nothing.

“ ‘It’s past eight,’ said he, as he perceived him stealing a look at his watch. ‘Never mind me, if you’ve any appointment—I’ll soon learn to make myself at home here. Perhaps you’d better

ring for some more claret, however, before you go—they don't know me yet.'

"Edward almost started from his chair at this speech—such a liberty had never before been heard of as to call for more wine; indeed their ordinary habits did not consume half what was placed on the table, but so taken by surprise was he, that he actually arose and rang the bell as he was desired.

" 'Some claret, Johann,' said he with a gulp, as the old butler entered.

"The man started back, and fixed his eyes on the empty decanter.

" 'And I say, ancient,' said Van Halsdt, 'don't decant it—you shook the last bottle confoundedly. It's old wine, and won't bear that kind of usage.'

"The old man moved away with a deep sigh, and returned in about ten minutes with a bottle from the cellar.

"Didn't Providence bless you with two hands, friend?' said Van Halsdt.—'Go down for another.'

" 'Go, Johann,' said Norvins, as he saw him

hesitate, and not knowing what his refusal might call forth ; and then without waiting for further parley, he arose and withdrew.

“ Well, thought he, when he was once more alone, if he is a good-looking fellow, and there’s no denying *that*, one comfort is, he is a confirmed drunkard. Marguerite will never be able to endure him ; for such, in his secret heart, was the reason of his premature dislike and dread of his new companion ; and as he strolled along he meditated on the many ways he should be able to contrast his own acquirements with the other’s deficiencies, for such he set them down at once, and gradually reasoned himself into the conviction that the fear of all rivalry from him was mere folly ; and that whatever success his handsome face and figure might have elsewhere, that Marguerite was not the girl to be caught by such attractions, when coupled with an unruly temper and an uneducated mind.

“ And he was right. Great as his own repugnance was towards him, hers was far greater. She not only avoided him on every occasion, but took

pleasure, as it seemed, in marking the cold distance of her manner to him, and contrasting it with her behaviour to others. It is true he appeared to care little for this; and only replied to it by a half-impertinent style of familiarity—a kind of jocular intimacy most insulting to a woman, and horribly tantalizing for those to witness, who are attached to her.

“I don’t wish to make my story a long one; nor could I without entering into the details of every-day life, which now became so completely altered. Marguerite and Norvins only met at rare intervals, and then less to cultivate each other’s esteem, than expatiate on the many demerits of him who had estranged them so utterly. All the reports to his discredit that circulated in Frankfort were duly conned over; and though they could lay little to his charge of their own actual knowledge, they only imagined the more, and condemned him accordingly.

“To Norvins he became hourly more insupportable. There was in all his bearing towards him, the quiet, measured tone, of a superior to an inferior—the patronizing protection of an elder, to one

younger and less able to defend himself; and which, with the other's consciousness of his many intellectual advantages over him, added double bitterness to the insult. As he never appeared in the bureau of the mission, nor in any way concerned himself with official duties, they rarely met, save at table; there, his appearance was the signal for constraint and reserve—an awkwardness that made itself felt the more, as the author of it seemed to exult in the dismay he created.

“Such, then, was the state of events when Norvins received his nomination as secretary of legation at Stutgardt. The appointment was a surprise to him, he did not even hear of the vacancy. The position, however, and the emoluments were such as to admit of his marrying, and he resolved to ask the baron for his daughter's hand, to which the rank and influence of his own family permitted him to aspire without presumption.

“He gave his willing consent; Marguerite accepted; and the only delay was now caused by the respect for an old Dutch custom—the bride

should be at least eighteen, and Marguerite yet wanted three months of that age. This interval Norvins obtained leave to pass at Frankfort; and now, they went about to all public places together as betrothed; paid visits in company, and were recognised by all their acquaintances as engaged to each other.

“Just at this time, a French cuirassier regiment marched into garrison in the town—they were on their way to the south of Germany, and only detained in Frankfort to make up their full complement of horses. In this regiment was a young Dutch officer, who once belonged to the same regiment as Van Halsdt, and who was broke by the court-martial for the same quarrel. They had fought twice with swords, and only parted with the dire resolve to finish the affair at the next opportunity. This officer was a man of an inferior class, his family being an obscure one of North Holland, and thus when dismissed the service, had no other resource than to enter the French army, at that time at war with Austria. He was said to be a man of overbearing temper and passion, and it was not likely that the circum-

stance of his expatriation and disgrace had improved him. However, some pledge Van Halsdt had made to his father, decided him in keeping out of the way. The report ran that he had given a solemn promise never to challenge, nor accept any challenge from the other, on any pretext whatsoever. Whatever the promise, certain it was, he left Frankfort the same day the regiment marched into town, and retired to Wiesbaden.

“The circumstance soon became the subject of town gossip, and plenty there were, most willing to attribute Van Halsdt's departure to prudential motives, rather than to give so wild a character any credit for filial ones. Several who felt offended at his haughty, supercilious manner, now exulted in this, as it seemed, fall to his pride; and Norvins, unfortunately, fell into the same track, and by many a sly inuendo, and half allusion to his absence, gave greater currency to the report, that his absence was dictated by other considerations than those of parental respect.

“Through all the chit-chat of the time, Marguerite showed herself highly indignant at Van

Halsdt's conduct. The quiet timid girl, who detested violence, and hated crime in any shape, felt disgusted at the thought of his poltroonery, and could not hear his name mentioned without an expression of contempt. All this delighted Edward. It seemed to be the just retribution on the former insolence of the other, and he longed for his return to Frankfort to witness the thousand slights that awaited him. Such a strange and unaccountable thing is our triumph over others, for the want of those qualities in which we see ourselves deficient. None so loud in decrying dishonesty and fraud, as the man who feels knave in his own heart. Who can censure female frailty like her who has felt its sting in her own conscience? you remember the great traveller, Mungo Park, used to calculate the depth of rivers in Africa, by rolling heavy stones over their banks and watching the air bubbles that mounted to the surface; so, oftentimes, may you measure the innate sense of a vice, by the execration some censor of morals bestows upon it. Believe me, these heavy chastisements of crime are many times but the cries of awakened conscience. I

speak strongly, but I feel deeply on this subject. But to my story:—It was the custom for Marguerite and her lover each evening to visit the theatre, where the minister had a box ; and as they were stepping into the carriage one night, as usual, Van Halsdt drove up to the door, and asked if he might accompany them. Of course, a refusal was out of the question—he was a member of the mission—he had done nothing to forfeit his position there, however much he had lost in the estimation of society generally, and they acceded to his request, still with a species of cold courtesy that would, by any other man, have been construed into a refusal.

“As they drove along in silence, the constraint increased at every moment, and had it not been for the long-suppressed feeling of hated rivalry, Norvins could have pitied Van Halsdt as he sat, no longer with his easy smile of self-satisfied indifference, but with a clouded heavy brow, mute and pale. As for Marguerite, her features expressed a species of quiet cold disdain, whenever she looked towards him, far more terrible to bear than anything like an open reproach. Twice or

thrice he made an effort to start some topic of conversation, but in vain, his observations were either unreplied to, or met a cold distant assent more chilling still. At length, as if resolved to break through their icy reserve towards him, he asked in a tone of affected indifference—

“‘Any changes in Frankfort, mademoiselle, since I had the pleasure of seeing you last?’

“‘None, sir, that I know of, save that the French cuirassier regiment marched this morning for Baden, *of which, however, it is more than probable you are aware already.*’

“On each of these latter words she laid an undue stress, fixing her eyes stedfastly on him, and speaking in a slow measured tone. He grew deeply red, almost black for a moment or two, his moustache seemed almost to bristle with the tremulous convulsion that shook his upper lip, then as suddenly he became lividly pale, while the great drops of perspiration stood on his brow, and fell upon his cheek. Not another word was spoken. They soon reached the theatre, when Norvins offered Marguerite his arm, Van Halsdt slowly following them up stairs.

“The play was one of Lessing’s, and well acted, but somehow Norvins could pay no attention to the performance, his whole soul was occupied by other thoughts. Marguerite appeared to him in a different light from what he had ever seen her; not less to be loved, but altogether different: the staid, placid girl, whose quiet thoughts seemed never to rest on topics of violent passion or excitement; who fled from the very approach of anything bordering on overwrought feeling, now appeared carried away by her abhorrence of a man, to the very extreme of hatred, for conduct, which Norvins scarcely thought she should have considered even faulty. If, then, his triumph over Van Halsdt brought any pleasure to his heart, a secret sense of his own deficiency in the very quality for which she condemned him, made him shudder.

“While he reflected thus, his ear was struck with a conversation in the box next his, in which were seated a large party of young men, with two or three ladies, whose air, dress, and manners, were, at least, somewhat equivocal.

“‘And so, Alphonse, you succeeded after all?’

said a youth, to a large, powerful, dark-moustached man, whose plain blue frock could not conceal the soldier.

“ ‘Yes,’ replied he, in a deep sonorous voice, ‘our doctor managed the matter for me—he pronounced me unable to march before to-morrow; he said that my old wound in the arm gave symptoms of uneasiness, and required a little more rest; but, by St. Denis, I see little benefit in the plan after all. This “white feather” has not ventured back, and I must leave in the morning without meeting him.’

“These words, which were spoken somewhat loudly, could be easily heard in any part of the adjoining box, and scarcely were they uttered when Van Halsdt, who sat the entire evening far back, and entirely concealed from view, covered his face with both his hands, and remained in that posture for several minutes. When he withdrew them, the alteration in his countenance was actually fearful. Though his cheeks were pale as death, his eyes were bloodshot, and the lids swelled and congested; his lips, too, were protruded, and trembled like one in an ague,

and his clasped hands shook against the chair.

“Norvins would have asked him if he were ill, but was afraid even to speak to him; while again his attention was drawn off by the voices near him.

“‘Not got a bouquet?’ said the large man to a lady beside him; ‘*pardie*, that’s too bad. Let me assist you. I perceive that this pretty damsel, who turns her shoulder so disdainfully towards us, makes little use of hers, and so “*avec permission*,” mademoiselle!’ With that he stood up, and leaning across the division into their box, stretched over his hand and took the bouquet that lay before Marguerite, and handed it to the lady at his side.

“Marguerite started back, as her eyes flashed with offended pride, and then turned them on her lover. He stood up, not to resent the insult, but to offer her his arm to leave the box. She gave him a look—never in a glance was there read such an expression of withering contempt—and, drawing her shawl around her, said in a low voice, ‘the carriage.’ Before he could open the box

door to permit her to pass out, Van Halsdt sprang to the front of the box, and stretched over—then came a crash—a cry—a confused shout of many voices together—and the word '*polisson*,' above all; but hurrying Marguerite along, Norvins hastened down the stairs and assisted her into the carriage. As she took her place, he made a gesture, as if to follow, but she drew the door towards her, and with a shuddering expression—'No'—leaned back, and closed the door. The calèche moved on, and Norvins was alone in the street.

"I shall not attempt to describe the terrific rush of sensations that came crowding on his brain. Coward as he was, he would have braved a hundred deaths rather than endure such agony. He turned towards the theatre, but his craven spirit seemed to paralyze his very limbs; he felt as if though his antagonist were before him he would not have had energy to speak to him. Marguerite's look was ever before him—it sank into his inmost soul—it was burning there like a fire, that no memory nor after sorrow should ever quench.

“As he stood thus, an arm was passed hastily through his, and he was led along. It was Van Halsdt, his hat drawn over his brows, and a slight mark of blood upon his cheek. He seemed so overwhelmed with his own sensations as not to be cognizant of his companion's.

“‘I struck him,’ said he, in a thick guttural voice, the very breathings of vengeance, ‘I struck him to my feet. It is now *à la mort* between us, and better it should be so at once.’ As he spoke thus he turned towards the Boulevard, instead of the usual way towards the embassy.

“‘We are going wrong,’ said Norvins—‘this leads to the *Breiten gasse*.’

“‘I know it,’ was the brief reply, ‘we must make for the country; the thing was too public not to excite measures of precaution. We are to rendezvous at Katznach.’

“‘With swords?’

“‘No; pistols, *this time*,’ said he, with a fiendish emphasis on the last words.

“They walked on for above an hour, passing through the gate of the town, and reached the

open country, each silent and sunk in his own thoughts.

“At a small *cabaret* they procured horses and a guide to Katznach, which was about eleven miles up the mountain. The way was so steep that they were obliged to walk their horses, and frequently to get down and lead them, yet not a word was spoken on either side. Once, only, Norvins asked ‘how he was to get his pistols from Frankfort?’ which the other answered merely, ‘*they provide the weapons!*’ and they were again silent.

“Norvins was somewhat surprised and offended also, that his companion should have given him so little of his confidence at such a moment; gladly, indeed, would he have exchanged his own thoughts for those of any one else; but he left him to ruminate in silence on his unhappy position, and to brood over miseries that every minute seemed to aggravate.

“‘They’re coming up the road yonder; I see them now,’ said Van Haldst, suddenly, as he aroused the other from a deep train of melancholy

thoughts. 'Ha, how lame he walks,' cried he with savage exultation.

"In a few minutes the party, consisting of four persons, dismounted from their horses, and entered the little burial-ground beside the chapel. One of them advancing hastily towards Van Halsdt, shook him warmly by the hand, and whispered something in his ear. The other replied: when the first speaker turned towards Norvins, with a look of ineffable scorn, and then passed over to the opposite group. Edward soon perceived that this man was to act as Halsdt's friend; and though really glad that such an office fell not to his share, was deeply offended on being thus, as it were, passed over. In this state of dogged anger, he sat down on a tombstone, and, as if having no interest whatever in the whole proceedings, never once looked towards them.

"He did not notice that the party now took the path towards the wood, nor was he conscious of the flight of time, when suddenly the loud report of two pistols, so close together as to be almost blended, rang through his ears. Then he sprang up, a dreadful pang piercing his bosom;

some terrible sense of guilt he could neither fathom nor explain, flashing across him; at the same instant the brushwood crashed behind him, and Van Halsdt and his companion came out; the former with his eyes glistening and his cheek flushed, the other pale and dreadfully agitated. He nodded towards Edward significantly, and Van Halsdt said—‘Yes.’

“Before Norvins could conjecture what this meant, the stranger approached him, and said—

“‘I am sorry, sir, the sad work of this morning cannot end here; but of course you are prepared to afford my friend the only reparation in your power.’

“‘Me—reparation—what do you mean?—afford whom?’

“‘Monsieur van Halsdt,’ said he, coolly; and with a slight emphasis of contempt as he spoke.

“‘Monsieur van Halsdt!’ he never offended *me*—I never insulted, never injured *him*,’ said he, trembling at every word.

“‘Never injured *me*!’ cried Van Halsdt. ‘Is it nothing that you have ruined me for ever—that your cowardice to resent an affront offered to one,

who should have been dearer than your life, a hundred times told, should have involved me in a duel with a man I swore never to meet, never to cross swords, nor exchange a shot with? Is it nothing that I am to be disgraced by my king, disinherited by my father—a beggar, an exile at once? Is it nothing, sir, that the oldest name of Friesland is to be blotted from the nobles of his nation? Is it nothing that for you I should be *what I now am?*”

“The last words were uttered in a voice that made Norvins’ very blood run cold; but he could not speak; he could not mutter a word in answer.

“‘What!’ said Van Halsdt, in an accent of cutting sarcasm; ‘I thought that perhaps in the suddenness of the moment, your courage, unprepared for an unexpected call, might not have stood your part; but can it be true that you are a coward? Is this the case?’

“Norvins hung down his head—the sickness of death was on him. The dreadful pause was broken at last; it was Van Halsdt who spoke—

“‘Adieu, sir; I grieve for you. I hope we

may never meet again: yet let me give you a counsel ere we part. There is but one coat men can wear with impunity, when they carry a malevolent and a craven spirit; you can be an ——' ”

“Monsieur l'Abbé, the dinner is on the table,” said a servant, entering at this moment of the story.

“*Ma foi*, and so it is,” said he, looking gaily at his watch, as he rose from his chair.

“But, mademoiselle,” said I, “what became of her?”

“Ah, Marguerite; she was married to Van Halsdt in less than three months; the cuirassier fortunately recovered from his wounds; the duel was shown to be a thing forced by the stress of consequences. As for Van Halsdt, the king forgave him, as did his father also: he is now ambassador at Naples.”

“And the other, Norvins? though I scarcely feel any interest in him.”

“I'm sorry for it,” said he, laughing; “but won't you move forward?”

With that he made me a polite bow to precede

him towards the dinner room, and followed me with the jaunty step and the light gesture of an easy and contented nature.

I need scarcely say that I did not sit next the abbé that day at dinner; on the contrary, I selected the most stupid-looking old man I could find for my neighbour, hugging myself in the thought, that where there is little agreeability, Nature may kindly have given in recompense some traits of honesty, and some vestiges of honour. Indeed, such a disgust did I feel for the amusing features of the pleasantest part of the company—and so inextricably did I connect repartée with rascality, that I trembled at every good thing I heard, and stole away early to bed, resolving never to take sudden fancies to agreeable people as long as I lived—an oath which a long residence in a certain country, that shall be nameless, happily permits me to keep, with little temptation to transgress.

The next morning was indeed a brilliant one—the earth refreshed by rain—the verdure more brilliant—the mountain streams grown fuller: all the landscape seemed to shine forth in its glad-

dest features. I was up and stirring soon after sunrise; and, with all my prejudices against such a means of "lengthening one's days," sat at my window, actually entranced with the beauty of the scene. Beyond the river, there rose a heath-clad mountain, along which misty masses of vapour swept hurriedly, disclosing as they passed some tiny patch of cultivation, struggling for life amid granite rocks and abrupt precipices. As the sun grew stronger, the grey tints became brown, and the brown grew purple, while certain dark lines that tracked their way from summit to base, began to shine like silver, and showed the course of many a mountain torrent, tumbling and splashing, towards that little lake that lay calm as a mirror below. Immediately beneath my window was the garden of the Chateau: a succession of terraces descending to the very river—the quaint yew hedges, carved into many a strange device—the balustrades half hidden by flowering shrubs and creepers—the marble statues peeping out here and there, trim and orderly as they looked, were a pleasant feature of the picture, and heightened the effect of the desolate

grandeur of the distant view. The very swans that sailed about on the oval pond, told of habitation and life, just as the broad expanded wing that soared above the mountain peak, spoke of the wild region where the eagle was king.

My musings were suddenly brought to a close by a voice on the terrace beneath. It was that of a man who was evidently, from his pace, enjoying his morning's promenade under the piazza of the Chateau, while he hummed a tune to pass away the time:—

“Why, soldiers, why
Should we be melancholy, boys,
Why, soldiers, why?
Whose business——

Holloa, there, Francois, ain't they stirring yet? why, it's past six o'clock.”

The person addressed was a serving man, who, in the formidable attire of an English groom—in which he was about as much at home as a coronation champion feels in plate armour—was crossing the garden towards the stables.

“No, sir; the count won't start before eight.”

“And when do we breakfast?”

"At seven, sir."

"The devil—another hour—

"Why, soldiers, why
Should we be ——

I say, Francois, what horse do they mean for Mademoiselle Laura to-day?"

"The mare she rode on Wednesday, sir. Mademoiselle liked her very much."

"And what have they ordered for the stranger that came the night before last? The gentleman who was robbed——"

"I know, I know, sir; the roan, with the cut on her knee."

"Why, she's a mad one—she's a run-away."

"So she is, sir: but then, monsieur is an Englishman—and the count says he'll soon tame the roan filly."

"Why, soldiers, why," hummed the old colonel, for it was Muddleton himself; and the groom pursued his way without further questioning. Whereupon two thoughts took possession of my brain: one of which was, what peculiar organization it is which makes certain old people

who have nothing to do, early risers; the other, what offence had I committed to induce the master of the Chateau to plot my sudden death.

The former has been a puzzle to me all my life. What a blessing should sleep be to that class of beings who do nothing when awake; how they should covet those drowsy hours that give, as it were, a sanction to indolence; with what anxiety they ought to await the fall of day, as announcing the period when they become the equals of their fellow men; and with what terror they should look forward to the time when the busy world is up and stirring, and their incapacity and slothfulness only become more glaring from contrast. Would not any one say that such people would naturally cultivate sleep as their comforter? Should they not hug their pillow as the friend of their bosom. On the contrary, these are invariably your early risers: every house where I have ever been on a visit, has had at least one of these troubled and troublesome spirits; the torment of boots—the horror of housemaids. Their chronic cough forms a duet with the inharmonious crowing of the

young cock, who, for lack of better knowledge, proclaims day a full hour before his time. Their creaking shoes are the accompaniment to the scrubbing of brass fenders and the twigging of carpets; the jarring sounds of opening shutters, and the cranking discord of a hall-door chain; their heavy step sounds like a nightmare's tread, through the whole sleeping house; and what is the object of all this? What new fact have they acquired? what difficult question have they solved? whom have they made happier, or wiser, or better? Not Betty, the cook, certainly, whose morning levee of beggars they have most uncere- moniously scattered and scared: not Mary, the housemaid, who, unaccustomed to be caught *en déshabille*, is cross the whole day after, though he was "only an elderly gentleman, and wore spectacles:" not Richard, who cleaned their shoes by candle-light: nor the venerable butler, who, from shame sake, is up and dressed, but who, still asleep, stands with his corkscrew in his hand, under the vague impression that it is a late supper party.

These people, too, have always a consequen-

tial, self-satisfied look about them; they seem to say, as though they knew a "thing or two" others had no wot of: as though the day, more confidential when few were by, told them some capital secrets the sleepers never heard of; and they make this pestilential habit a reason for eating the breakfast of a Cossack, as if the consumption of victuals was a cardinal virtue.

Civilized differs from savage life as much by the regulation of time as by any other feature. I see no objection to your red man, who, probably, can't go to breakfast till he has caught a bear, being up betimes; but for the gentleman who goes to bed with the conviction that hot rolls and coffee, tea and marmelade, bloaters and honey, ham, muffins, and eggs await him at ten o'clock; for him, I say, these absurd vagabondisms are an insufferable affectation, and a most unwarrantable liberty with the peace and privacy of a household.

Meanwhile old Colonel Muddleton is parading below; and here we must leave him for another "Chapter."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE "OUVERTURE DE LA CHASSE."

I WISH any one would explain to me why it is, that the tastes and pursuits of nations, are far more difficult of imitation than their languages or institutions. Nothing is more common than to find Poles and Russians speaking half the tongues of Europe like natives. Germans frequently attain to similar excellence; and some Englishmen have the gift also. In the same way it would not be difficult to produce many foreigners well acquainted with all the governmental details of the countries they have visited—the policy, foreign and domestic; the statistics of debt and taxation; the religious influences; the resources, and so forth. Indeed, in our days of universal travel, this kind of information has more or less become general, while the tastes and habits, which appear so much more easily acquired, are

the subjects of the most absurd mistakes, or the most blundering imitation. To instance what I mean, who ever saw any but a Hungarian dance the mazourka with even, tolerable grace? Who ever saw waltzing except among the Austrians? Who ever beheld "toilette" out of France? So it is, however. Some artificial boundary drawn with a red line on a map by the hand of Nesselrode or Talleyrand—some pin stuck down in the chart by the fingers of Metternich—decides the whole question, and says, "Thus far shalt thou dance and no farther. Beyond this there are no *patés de perigord*. Here begin pipes and tobacco—there end maccaroni and music." Whatever their previous tastes, men soon conform to the habits of a nation, and these arbitrary boundaries of the gentlemen of the red tape, become like nature's own frontiers of flood or mountain. Not but it must have been somewhat puzzling in the good days of the Consulate and the Empire to trim one's sails quick enough for the changes of the political hurricane. You were an Italian yesterday—you are a Frenchman to day: you went to bed a Prussian, and you awoke a Dutch-

man. These were sore trials, and had they been pushed much further, must have led to the most strange misconceptions and mistakes.

Now, with a word of apology for the digression, let me come back to the cause of it—and yet why should I make my excuses on this head? These “Loiterings” of mine are as much in the wide field of dreamy thought, as over the plains and valleys of the material world. I never promised to follow a regular track, nor did I set out on my journey bound, like a king’s messenger, to be at my destination in a given time. Not a bit of it. I’ll take “mine ease in mine inn.” I’ll stay a week—a fortnight—ay, a month, here, if I please it. You may not like the accommodation, nor wish to put up with a “settle and stewed parsnips.” Be it so. Here we part company then. If you don’t like my way of travel, there’s the diligence, or, if you prefer it, take the extra post, and calculate, if you can, how to pay your postillion in kreutzers—invented by the devil, I believe, to make men swear—and for miles, that change with every little grand-duchy of three acres in extent. I wish you joy of your travelling com-

panions—the German who smokes, and the Frenchman who frowns at you; the old *Vrau* who falls asleep on your shoulder, and the “*Bonne*” who gives you a baby to hold in your lap. But why have I put myself into this towering passion? Heaven knows it's not my wont. And once more to go back, and find, if I can, what I was thinking of—I have it. This same digression of mine was *à propos* to the scene I witnessed, as our breakfast concluded at the Chateau.

All the world was to figure on horseback. The horses themselves no bad evidence of the exertions used to mount the party. Here, was a rugged pony from the Ardennes, with short neck and low shoulder—his head broad as a bull's, and his counter like the bow of a Dutch galliot: there, a great Flemish beast, seventeen hands high, with a tail festooned over a straw “bustle,” and even still hanging some inches on the ground—straight in the shoulder, and straighter in the pasterns—giving the rider a shock at every motion, that, to any other than a Fleming, would lead to concussion of the brain. Here stood an

English thoroughbred, sadly “shook” before, and with that tremulous quivering of the fore-legs that betokens a life of hard work; still, with all his imperfections, and the mark of a spavin behind, he looked like a gentleman among a crowd of low fellows—a reduced gentleman, it is true—but a gentleman still. His mane was long and silky; his coat was short and glossy; his head finely formed, and well put on his long, taper, and well-balanced neck. Beside him was a huge Holsteiner, flapping his broad flanks with a tail like a weeping ash—a great massive animal, that seemed from his action as if he were in the habit of ascending stairs, and now and then got the shock one feels when they come to a step too few. Among the mass there were some “Limoussins”—pretty, neatly-formed little animals, with great strength for their appearance, and showing a deal of Arab breeding; and an odd Schimmel or two from Hungary, snorting and pawing like a war-horse. But the staple was a collection of such screws as every week are to be seen at Tattersall’s auction, announced as “first-rate weight-carriers, with any fox hounds—fast in

double and single harness, and 'believed' sound by the owner." Well! what credulous people are the proprietors of horses! These are the great exports to the Low Countries, repaid in mock Vandyks, apocryphal Rembrandts, and fabulous Hobbimas; for the exhibition of which, in our dining-rooms and libraries, we are as heartily laughed at, as they are, for their taste in matters equine! and in the same way exactly as we insist upon a great name with our landscape, or our battle, so your Fleming must have a pedigree with his hunter. There must be "dam to Louisa," and "own brother to Rat-catcher" and Titus Oates, that won the "Levanter handicap" in — no matter where. Oh dear, oh dear! when shall we have sense enough to go without Sneyders and Ostade? and when will Flemings be satisfied to ride on beasts which befit them—strong of limb, slow of gait, dull of temper, and not over-fastidious in feeding; whose parentage has had no registry, and whose blood-relations never were chronicled?

Truly, England is the land of "turn out." All the foreign imitations of it are most ludicrous,

from Prince Max of Bavaria, who brought back with him to Munich a lord-mayor's coach, gilding, emblazonry, wigs, and all, as the true type of a London equipage—down to those strange, merry-andrew figures, in orange plush breeches and sky-blue frocks, that one sees galloping after their masters along the Champs Elysées, like insane comets taking an airing on horseback. The whole thing is absurd: they cannot accomplish it, do what they will—there's no success in the endeavour. It is like our miserable failures to get up a *petit diner* or a *soirée*. If then, French, Italians, and Germans, fail so lamentably, only think, I beseech you, of Flemings—imagine Belgium *à cheval*! The author of *Hudibras* discovered years ago that these people were fish—that their land life was a little bit of distraction they permitted themselves to take from time to time; but that their real element was a dyke or a canal. What would he have said, if he saw them on horseback?

Now, I am free to confess that few men have less hope to win the world by deeds of horsemanship than Arthur O'Leary. I have ever

looked upon it as a kind of presumption in me to get into the saddle. I have regarded my taking the reins as a species of duplicity on my part—a tacit assumption that I had any sort of control over the beast; I have appeared to myself guilty of a moral misdemeanour—the “obtaining a ride under false pretences.” Yet when I saw myself astride of the “roan with the cut on her knee,” and looked around me at the others, I fancied that I must have taken lessons from Franconi, without knowing it; and even among the moustached heroes of the evening before, I bore myself like a gallant cavalier.

“You sit your horse devilish like your father; he had just the same easy *degagé* way in his saddle,” said the old colonel, tapping his snuff-box, and looking at me with a smile of marked approval; while he continued in a lower tone, “I’ve told Laura to get near you, if the mare becomes troublesome: the Flemings, you know, are not much to boast of as riders.”

I acknowledged the favour as well as I could, for already my horse was becoming fidgetty. Every one about me thinking it essential to spur

and whip his beast into the nearest approach to mettle, and caper about like so many devils, while they cried out to each other—

“Regardez, Charles, comment il est vif ce ‘Tear away.’ C’est une bête du diable. Ah tiens—tiens, vois donc ‘Albert.’ Le voila, c’est, ‘All-in-my-eye,’ fils de ‘Charles Fox,’ frere de ‘Sevins-de-main’——”

“Ah, marquis, how goes it?—Il est beau votre cheval.”

“Oui, parbleu; he is frere aîné of ‘Kiss-mi-ladi,’ qui a gagné le handicap á l’île du dogs.”

And thus did these miserable imitators of Ascot and Doncaster, of Leamington and the Qorn, talk away the most insane nonsense, which had been sold to them by some London horse-dealer, as the pedigree of their hackneys.

It was really delightful amid all this, to see the two English girls, who sat their horses so easily and so gracefully—bending slightly with each curvet, they only yielded to the impulse of the animal as much as served to keep their own balance. The light but steady finger on the

bridle, the air of quiet composure, the *pose*, uniting elegance with command. What a contrast to the distorted gesture, the desperate earnestness, and the fearful tenacity, of their much-whiskered companions. And yet it was to please and fascinate these same pinchbeck sportsmen, these girls were then there. If they rode over everything that day—fence or rail, brook or bank—it was because the *chasse* to them was less “*au cerf*” than “*au mari*.”

Such was the case. The old colonel had left England because he preferred the Channel to the Fleet. The glorious liberty which Englishmen are so proud of, would have been violated in his person had he remained. His failing, like many others, was that he had lived, “not wisely, but too well;” and in short, however cold the climate, London would have proved too hot for him, had he stayed another day in it.

What a deluge of such people float over the Continent; living well and what is called “most respectably;” dining at embassies and dancing at courts; holding their heads very high, too—most scrupulous about acquaintances, and exclusive in

all their intimacies. They usually prefer foreign society to that of their countrymen, for obvious reasons; few Frenchmen read the Gazette—I never heard of a German, who knew any thing about the list of outlaws. Of course they have no more to say to English preserves, and so they take out a license to shoot over the foreign manors; and though a marquis or a count are but “small deer,” it’s the only game left, and they make the best of it.

At last the host appeared, attired in a scarlet frock, and wearing a badge at his buttonhole—something about the shape and colour of a new pennypiece. He was followed by above a dozen others, similarly habited, minus the badge; and then came about twenty more, dressed in green frocks, with red collars and cuffs, a species of smaller deities, who, I learned, were called “Aspirants,” though to what they aspired, where it was, or when they hoped for it, nobody could inform me. Then there were piquers, and grooms, and whippers-in, without number—all noisy and all boisterous; about twenty couple of fox hounds giving tongue, and a due proportion

of the scarlet folk blowing away at that melodious pipe—the *cor de chasse*.

With this goodly company I moved forward, “alone, but in a crowd;” for, unhappily, my want of tact as a sporting character the previous evening, had damaged me seriously with the hunting youths, and Mademoiselle Laura showed no desire to accept the companionship her worthy father had selected for her. No matter, thought I, there’s a great deal to see here, and I can do without chatting, in so stirring a scene as this.

Her companion was the Comte D’Espagne, an admirable specimen of what the French call “Tigre;” for be it known that the country, which once obtained a reputation little short of ludicrous for its excess of courtesy and the surplusage of its ceremony, has now, in the true spirit of reaction, adopted a degree of abruptness we should call rudeness, and a species of cold effrontery we might mistake for insolence. The disciples of this new school are significantly called “Young France,” and distinguished for length of hair and beard—a look of frowning

solemnity, and mock pre-occupation, very well-fitting garments, and yellow gloves. These gentlemen are sparing of speech, and more so of gesture. They give to understand that some onerous deed of regeneration is expected at their hands—some revival of the old spirit of the nation. Though in what way it is to originate in curled moustaches and laquered boots, is still a mystery to the many; but enough of them now. Of these was the Count D'Espagne.

I had almost forgotten to speak of one part of our *cortège*, which should certainly not be omitted. This was a wooden edifice on wheels, drawn by a pair of horses at a brisk rate at the tail of the procession. At first it occurred to me that it might be an ambulant dog-kennel, to receive the hounds on their return. Then I suspected it to be a walking hospital for wounded sportsmen; and certainly I could not but approve of the idea, as I called to mind the position of any unlucky chasseur, in the event of a fall, with his fifteen feet of "metal main" around him; and I only hoped that a plumber accompanied the expedition: My humanity, however, led me

astray. The pagoda was destined for the accommodation of a stag, who always assisted at the *chasse*, whenever no other game could be started. This venerable beast, some five and twenty years in the service, was like a stock piece in the theatres, which, always ready, could be produced without a moment's notice. Here was no rehearsal requisite: if a *prima donna* was sulky, or a tenor was drunk—if the fox wouldn't show, or the deer were shy—there was the stag, perfectly prepared for a pleasant canter of a few miles, and ready, if no one was intemperately precipitate, to give a very agreeable morning's sport. His perfections, however, went farther than this: for he was trained to cross the high road at all convenient thoroughfares, occasionally taking the main streets of a village, or the market-place of a bourg, swimming whenever the water was shallow enough to follow him on horseback, and giving up the ghost at the blast of a grand maitre's bugle, with an accuracy as unerring as though he had performed at Franconi's.

Unhappily for me, I was not fated to witness an exhibition of his powers; for scarcely had we

emerged from the wood when the dogs were laid on, and soon after found a fox.

For some time the scene was an animated one, as every Fleming seemed to pin his faith on some favourite dog—and it was rather amusing to witness the eagerness with which each followed the movements of his adopted animal, cheering him on, and encouraging him to the top of his bent. At last the word—away! was given, and suddenly the dogs broke cover, and made across the plain in the direction of a great wood, or rather forest, above a mile off. The country happily for most of us—I know it was so for me—was an open surface of gentle undulation, stubble and turnips the only impediments, and clay soft enough to make a fall easy.

The sight was so far exhilarating, that red coats in a gallop have always a pleasant effect; besides which, the very concourse of riders looks well. However, even as unsportsmanlike an eye as mine, could detect the flaws in jockeyship about me—the fierce rushings of the gentlemen who pushed through the deepest ground, with a loose rein, flogging manfully the while; the pendulous

motions of others, between the mane and the haunches, with every stride of the beast. But I had little time for such speculations—the hour of my own trial was approaching: “the roan” was getting troublesome, the pace was gradually working up her mettle, and she had given three or four preparatory bounds, as though to see whether she’d part company with me, before she ran away, or not. My own calculations at the moment were not very dissimilar—I was meditating a rupture of the partnership too. The matrix of a full-length figure of Arthur O’Leary in red clay, was the extent of any damage I could receive, and I only looked for a convenient spot, where I might fall unseen. As I turned my head on every side, hoping for some secluded nook, some devil of a hunter by way of directing the dogs, gave a blast of his brass instrument, about a hundred yards before me—the thing was now settled: the roan gave a whirl of her long vicious tail, plunged fearfully, and throwing down her head and twisting it to one side, as if to have a peep at my confusion, away she went. From having formed one of the rear guard, I now closed

up with the main body—"aspirants," all—through whom I dashed like a catapult; and notwithstanding repeated shouts of—Pull in, sir!—hold back! etc., continued my onward course; a few seconds more, and I was in the thick of the scarlet coats, my beast at the stretch of her speed, and caring nothing for the bridle. Amid a shower of *sacrés* that fell on me like hail, I sprung through them, making the "red ones" black with every stroke of my gallop. Leaving them far behind, I flew past the grand maitre himself, who rode in the van, almost upsetting him by a side spring, as I passed; a malediction reached me as I went; but the forest soon received me in its dark embrace, and I saw no more.

It was at first a source of consolation to me, to think that every stride removed me from the reach of those, whose denunciations I had so unfortunately incurred—grand maitre, chasseurs, and aspirants—they were all behind me. Aye, for that matter, so were the dogs and the piquers, and, for aught I knew, the fox with them. When I discovered, however, that the roan continued her speed, still unabated, I began to be somewhat dis-

concerted. It was true the ground was perfectly smooth and safe : a long *allée* of the wood, with turf shorn close as a pleasure ground. I pulled and sawed the bit, I jerked the bridle, and performed all the manual exercise I could remember, as advised in such extremities ; but to no use. It seemed to me that some confounded echo started the beast, and incited her to increased speed. Just as this notion struck me, I heard a voice behind cry out —“ Do hold in—try and hold in, Mr. O'Leary !” I turned my head, and there was Laura, scarce a length behind, her thoroughbred straining every sinew to come up. No one else was in sight, and there we were, galloping like mad, with the wood all to ourselves.

I can very well conceive why the second horse in a race does his best to get foremost, if it were only the indulgence of a very natural piece of curiosity to see what the other has been running for ; but why the first one only goes the faster, because there are others behind him, that is a dead puzzle to me. But so it was ; my ill starred beast never seemed to have put forth her full powers till she was followed. “ *Ventre a terre,*”

as the French say, was now the pace, and though from time to time Laura would cry out to me, to hold back, I could almost swear I heard her laughing at my efforts. Meanwhile the wood was becoming thicker and closer, and the *allée* narrower and evidently less travelled; still it seemed to have no end or exit. Scarcely had we rounded one turn when a vista of miles would seem to stretch away before us, passing over which, another, as long again, would appear.

After about an hour's hard galloping, if I dare form any conjecture as to the flight of time, I perceived with a feeling of triumph that the roan was relaxing somewhat in her stride, and beginning to evince, by an up-and-down kind of gait, what sailors call a "fore-and-aft" motion, that she was getting enough of it. I turned and saw Laura about twenty yards behind: her thoroughbred, dead beat, and only able to sling along at that species of lobbing canter blood cattle can accomplish, under any exigency. With a bold effort I pulled up short, and she came alongside of me, and before I could summon courage to meet the reproaches I expected for having been

the cause of her runaway, she relieved my mind by a burst of as merry and good-tempered laughter as ever I listened to. The emotion was contagious, and so I laughed too, and it was full five minutes before either of us could speak.

“Well, Mr. O’Leary ! I hope you know where we are,” said she, drying her eyes, where the sparkling drops of mirth were standing ; for I assure you, I don’t.”

“Oh, perfectly,” replied I, as my eye caught a board nailed against a tree, on which some very ill-painted letters announced, “*La route de Bouvigne*”—“we are on the high road to Bouvigne, wherever that may be.”

“Bouvigne !” exclaimed she, in an accent of some alarm—“why, it’s five leagues from the Chateau ; I travelled there once by the high road. How are we ever to get back ?”

That was the very question I was then canvassing in my own mind, without a thought of how it was to be solved. However, I answered with an easy indifference—“Oh, nothing easier—we’ll take a calèche at Bouvigne.”

“But, they’ve none.”

“Well, then, fresh horses.”

“There's not a horse in the place ; it's a little village near the Meuse, surrounded with tall granite rocks, and only remarkable for its ruined castle, the ancient schloss of Philip de Bouvigne.”

“How interesting !” said I, delighted to catch at anything which should give the conversation a turn ; “and who was Philip de Bouvigne ?”

“Philip,” said the lady, “was the second or third count, I forget which, of the name. The chronicles say that he was the handsomest and most accomplished youth of the time. Nowhere could he meet his equal at joust or tournament ; while his skill in arms was the least of his gifts ; he was a poet and a musician. In fact, if you were only to believe his historians, he was the most dangerous person for the young ladies of those days to meet with. Not that he ran away with them, ‘*sur la grande route.*’ ” As she said this, a burst of laughing stopped her ; and it was one I could readily forgive, though myself the object of it. “However,” resumed she, “I believe he was just as bad. Well, to pursue my story, when

Philip was but eighteen, it chanced that a party of warriors, bound for the Holy Land, came past the Castle of Bouvigne, and, of course, passed the night there. From them, many of whom had already been in Palæstine, Philip heard the wondrous stories the crusaders ever brought back of combats and encounters, of the fearful engagements with the infidels, and the glorious victories of the cross. And at length, so excited did his mind become by the narrations, that he resolved on the spot to set out for the Holy Land, and see with his own eyes the wonderful things they had been telling him.

“This resolution could not fail of being applauded by the rest, but by none was it met with such decided approval as by Henri de Bethune, a young Liegois, then setting out on his first crusade, who could not help extolling Philip’s bravery, and above all, his devotion in the great cause, in quitting his home, and his young and beautiful wife; for I must tell you, as indeed I ought to have told you before, he was but a few weeks married to the lovely Alice de Franchèmont, the only daughter of the old Graf de

Franchemont, whose castle you may see the ruins of, near Chaude Fontaine."

I nodded assent, and she went on.

"Of course, you can imagine the dreadful grief of the young countess, when her husband broke to her his determination. If I were a novelist, I'd tell you of tears and entreaties, and sighs and faintings, of promises and pledges, and vows, and so forth; for, indeed, it was a very sorrowful piece of business; and she didn't at all fancy passing some three or four years alone in the old keep at Bouvigne, with no society, not one single friend to speak to. At first, indeed, she would not hear of it; and it was only at length, when Henri de Bethune undertook to plead for him, for he kindly remained several days at the chateau, to assist his friend at this conjuncture, that she gave way, and consented. Still her consent was wrung from her against her convictions, and she was by no means satisfied that the arguments she yielded to were a whit too sound; and this, let me remark *en passant*, is a most dangerous species of assent, when given by a lady—and one she always believes to be something of the

nature of certain Catholic vows, which are only binding while you believe them reasonable and just."

"Is that really so?" interrupted I. "Do you, indeed, give me so low a standard of female fidelity as this?"

"If women are sometimes false," replied she, "it is because men are never true; but I must go on with my tale. Away went Count Philip, and with him his friend De Bethune. The former, if the fact were known, just as low-spirited, when the time came, as the countess herself. But, then, he had the double advantage, that he had a friend to talk with, and make participator of his sorrows; besides, being the one leaving, not left."

"I don't know," interrupted I at this moment, "that you are right there; I think that the associations which cling to the places where we have been happy, are a good requital for the sorrowful memories they may call up. I'd rather linger around the spot consecrated by the spirit of past pleasure, and dream over again, hour by hour, day by day, the bliss I knew there, than break up the charm of such memories, by the vulgar

incidents of travel, and the common-place adventures of a journey."

"There, there I differ from you completely," replied she. "All your reflections and reminiscences, give them as fine names as you will, are nothing but sighings and repinings for what cannot come back again: and such things only injure the temper, and spoil the complexion; whereas,——but what are you laughing at?"

"I was smiling at your remark, which has only a feminine application."

"How teasing you are! I declare I'll argue no more with you. Do you want to hear my story?"

"Of all things—I'm greatly interested in it."

"Well, then, you must not interrupt me any more. Now, where was I? You actually made me forget where I stopped."

"You were just at the point where they set out, Philip and his friend, for the Holy Land."

"You must not expect from me any spirit-stirring narrative of the events in Palestine. Indeed, I'm not aware if the *Chronique de Flandre*, from which I take my tale, says anything

very particular about Philip de Bouvigne's performances. Of course, they were in accordance with his former reputation: he killed his Saracens, like a true knight—that there can be no doubt of. As for Henri de Bethune, before the year was over, he was badly wounded, and left on the field of battle, where some said he expired soon after; others averring that he was carried away to slavery. Be that as it might, Philip continued his career with all the enthusiasm of a warrior and a devotee, a worthy son of the church, and a brave soldier; unfortunately, however, forgetting the poor countess he had left behind him, pining away her youth at the barred casements of the old chateau; straining her eyes from day to day along the narrow causeway that led to the castle, and where no charger's hoof re-echoed, as of old, to tell of the coming of her lord. Very bad treatment, you'll confess; and so, with your permission, we'll keep her company for a little while. Madame la Comtesse de Bouvigne, as as some widows will do, only became the prettier from desertion. Her traits of beauty, mellowed by a tender melancholy, without being marke

by grief too deeply, assumed an imaginative character, or what men mistake for it."

"Indeed!" said I—catching at the confession.

"Well, I'll sure it is so," replied she. "In the great majority of cases you are totally ignorant of what is passing in a woman's mind. The girl that seemed all animation to-day, may have an air of deep depression to-morrow, and of downright wildness the next—simply by changing her *coiffure* from ringlets to braids, and from a *bandeau* to a state of dishevelled disorder. A little flattery of yourselves, artfully and well done, and you are quite prepared to believe any thing. In any case, the countess was very pretty, and very lonely.

"In those good days, when gentlemen left home, there were neither theatres, nor concerts, to amuse their poor neglected wives; they had no operas, nor balls, nor *soirées*, nor promenades. No; their only resource was to work away at some huge piece of landscape embroidery, which, begun in childhood, occupied a whole life, and transmitted a considerable labour of back ground

and foliage, to the next generation. The only pleasant people in those times, it seems to me, were the jongleurs and the pilgrims; they went about the world, fulfilling the destinies of newspapers—they chronicled the little events of the day, births, marriages, deaths, &c.,—and must have been a great comfort on a winter's evening.

“Well, it so chanced, that as the countess sat at her window one evening as usual, watching the sun go down, she beheld a palmer coming slowly along up the causeway, leaning on his staff, and seeming sorely tired and weary——

“But see,” cried Laura, at this moment, as we gained the crest of a gentle acclivity; “yonder is Bouvigne, it is a fine thing even yet.”

We both reined in our horses, the better to enjoy the prospect, and certainly it was a grand one. Behind us, and stretching for miles in either direction, was the great forest we had been traversing; the old Ardennes had been a forest in the times of Cæsar; its narrow pathways had echoed to the tread of Roman legions. In front

was a richly cultivated plain, undulating gently towards the Meuse, whose silver current wound round it like a garter; the opposite bank being formed by an abrupt wall of naked rocks of grey granite, sparkling with its brilliant hues, and shining doubly in the calm stream at its foot. On one of the highest cliffs, above an angle of the river, and commanding both reaches of the stream for a considerable way, stood Bouvigne; two great square towers, rising above a battlemented wall, pierced with long loop-holes, stood out against the clear sky; one of them, taller than the other, was surmounted by a turret at the angle, from the top of which something projected laterally like a beam.

“Do you see that piece of timber yonder?” said Laura.

“Yes,” said I; “it is the very thing I’ve been looking at, and wondering what it could mean.”

“Carry your eye downward,” said she, “and try if you can’t make out a low wall, connecting two masses of rock together; far, far down; do you see it?”

“I see a large archway, with some ivy over it?”

“That’s it; that was the great entrance to the ‘Schloss;’ before it is the fosse—a huge ditch cut in the solid rock, so deep as to permit the water of the Meuse, when flooded, to flow into it. Well, now, if you’ll look again, you’ll see that the great beam above hangs exactly over that spot. It was one of the rude defences of the time, and intended, by means of an iron basket, which hung from its extremity, to hurl great rocks and stones upon any assailant. The mechanism can still be traced, by which it was moved back and loaded; the piece of rope which opened the basket at each discharge of its contents was there not many years ago. There’s a queer, uncouth representation of the ‘*panier de morte*,’ as it is called, in the ‘Chronique,’ which you can see in the old library at Rochepied. But here we are already at the ferry.”

As she spoke we had just reached the bank of the Meuse, and in front was a beautifully situated little village, which, escarped in the mountain,

presented a succession of houses, at different elevations, all looking towards the stream. They were mostly covered with vines and honeysuckles, and with the picturesque outlines of gable and roof, diamond windows and rustic porches, had a very pleasing effect.

As I looked, I had little difficulty in believing that they were not a very equestrian people: the little pathways that traversed their village being inaccessible, save to foot-passengers, frequently ascending by steps cut in the rock, or rude staircases of wood, which hung here and there over the edge of the cliff in anything but a tempting way; the more so, as they trembled and shook with every foot that passed over them. Little mindful of this, the peasant might now be seen leaning over their frail barriers, and staring at the unwonted apparition of two figures on horseback; while I was endeavouring, by signs and gestures, to indicate our wish to cross over.

At last a huge raft appeared to move from beneath the willows of the opposite bank, and by

the aid of a rope fastened across the stream, two men proceeded slowly to ferry the great platform over.

Leading our horses cautiously forward, we embarked in this frail craft, and landed safely in Bouvigne.

CHAPTER XV.

BOUVIGNE.

“WILL you please now to tell me, Mr. O’Leary,” said Laura, in the easy tone of one who asked for information’s sake, “what are your plans here? for up to this moment I only perceive that we have been increasing the distance between us and Rochepied.”

“Quite true,” said I; “but you know we agreed it was impossible to hope to find our way back through the forest. Every *allée* here has not only its brother, but a large family, so absolutely alike, no one could distinguish between them; we might wander for weeks without extricating ourselves.”

“I know all that,” said she, somewhat pettishly; “still my question remains unanswered: what do you mean to do here?”

“First place,” said I, with the affected precision of one who had long since resolved on his mode of proceeding; “first place, we’ll dine.”

I stopped here to ascertain her sentiments on this part of my arrangement. She gave a short nod, and I proceeded—

“Having dined,” said I, “we’ll obtain horses and a calèche, if such can be found, for Rochepied.”

“I’ve told you already there are no such things here; they never see a carriage of any kind, from year’s end to year’s end; and there is not a horse in the whole village.”

“Perhaps then, there may be a chateau near, where, on making known our mishap, we might be able——

“Oh, that’s very simple as far as you’re concerned,” said she, with a saucy smile; “but I’d just as soon not have this adventure published over the whole country.”

Ha! by Jove, thought I, there’s a consideration completely overlooked by me; and so I became silent and thoughtful, and spoke not another

word, as we led our horses up the little rocky causeway towards the Toison D'or. If we did not admire the little auberge of the "Golden Fleece," truly the fault was rather our own, than from any want of merit in the little hostel itself. Situated on a rocky promontory on the river, it was built actually over the stream, the door fronting it, and approachable by a little wooden gallery, along which a range of orange trees and arbutus was tastefully disposed, scenting the whole air with their fragrance. As we walked along, we caught glimpses of several rooms within, neatly, and even handsomely furnished; and one salon in particular, where books and music lay scattered on the tables, with that air of habitation so pleasant to look on.

So far from our appearance in a neighbourhood thus remote and secluded creating any surprise, both host and hostess received us with the most perfect ease, blended with a mixture of cordial civility, very acceptable at the moment.

"We wish to dine at once," said I as I handed Laura to a chair.

“And to know in what way we can reach Rochepied,” said she; “our horses are weary, and not able for the road.”

“For the dinner, mademoiselle, nothing is easier; but as to getting forward to-night—”

“Oh, of course, I mean to-night—at once.”

“Ah, *voilà*,” said he, scratching his forehead in bewilderment; “we’re not accustomed to that, never. People generally stop a day or two; some spend a week here, and have horses from Dinant to meet them.”

“A week here!” exclaimed she; “and what in heaven’s name can they do here for a week?”

“Why, there’s the chateau, mademoiselle, the chateau of Philip de Bouvigne, and the gardens terraced in the rock—and there’s the well of St. Sevres, and the *Ile de Notre Dame aux bois*—and then there’s such capital fishing in the stream, abundance of trout.”

“Oh, delightful, I’m sure,” said she, impatiently; “but we wish to get on; so just set your mind to that, like a worthy man.”

“Well, we’ll see what can be done,” replied

he: "and before dinner's over, perhaps I may find some means to forward you."

With this he left the room, leaving mademoiselle and myself *en tête-à-tête*. And here let me confess, never did any man feel his situation more awkwardly than I did mine at that moment, and before any of my younger and more ardent brethren censure me, let me at least "show cause" in my defence. First, I myself, however unintentionally, had brought Mademoiselle Laura into her present embarrassment; but for me, and the confounded roan, she had been at that moment cantering away pleasantly with the Comte D'Espagne beside her, listening to his "*fleurettes*," and receiving his attentions. Secondly, I was, partly from bashfulness, partly from fear, little able to play the part my present emergency demanded, which should either have been one of downright indifference and ease, or something of a more tender nature, which indeed the very pretty companion of my travels might have perfectly justified.

"Well," said she, after a considerable pause; "this is about the most ridiculous scrape I've

ever been involved in. What *will* they think at the Chateau?"

"If they saw your horse when he bolted——"

"Of course they did," said she; "but what could they do? The Comte D'Espagne is always mounted on a slow horse, *he* couldn't overtake me—then the maitres couldn't pass the grand maitre."

"What?" cried I, in amazement; "I don't comprehend you perfectly."

"It's quite clear, nevertheless," replied she; "but I see you don't know the rules of the 'Chasse' in Flanders."

With this she entered into a detail of the laws of the hunting field, which more than once threw me into fits of laughter. It seemed, then, that the code decided that each horseman who followed the hounds should not be left to the wilfulness of his horse, or the aspirings of his ambition, as to the place he occupied in the chase. It was no momentary superiority of skill or steed—no display of jockeyship—no blood, that decided this momentous question. No, that was arranged on principles far less vacillating and

more permanent, at the commencement of the hunting season, by which it was laid down as a rule certain, that the grand maitre was always to ride first. His pace might be fast, or it might be slow, but his place was there. After him came the maitres, the people in scarlet, who, in right of paying double subscription, were thus costumed and thus privileged; while the aspirants in green followed last, their smaller contribution only permitting them to see so much of the sport as their respectful distance opened to them; and thus that indiscriminate rush, so observable in our hunting fields, was admirably avoided and provided against. It was no headlong piece of reckless daring—no impetuous dash of bold horsemanship; on the contrary, it was a decorous and stately canter, not after hounds, but after an elderly gentleman in a red coat and a brass tube, who was taking a quiet airing, in the pleasing delusion that he was hunting an animal unknown.

Wo unto the man who forgot his place in the procession; you might as well walk in to dinner before your host, under the pretence that you were a more nimble pedestrian. Besides this,

there were subordinate rules to no end—certain notes on the *cor de chasse* were royalties of the grand maitre; the maitres possessed others as *their* privileges, which no aspirant dare venture on. There were quavers for one, and semiquavers for the other; and, in fact, a most complicated system of legislation comprehended every incident, and, I believe, every accident of the sport, so much, that I can't trust my memory as to whether the wretched aspirants were not limited to tumbling in one particular direction, which, if so, must have been somewhat of a tyranny, seeing they were but men, and Belgians.

“This might seem all very absurd and very fabulous, if I referred to a number of years back; but when I say that the code exists still, in the year of grace, —'44, what will they say at Melton or Grantham? So you may imagine,” said Laura, on concluding her description, which she gave with much humour, “how manifold your transgressions have been this day; you have offended the grand maitre, maitres, and aspirants in one *coup*; you have broken up the whole ‘order of their going.’ ”

“And run away with the belle of the chateau,” added I; “*pour comble de hardiesse.*”

She did not seem half to relish my jest, however; and gave a little shake of the head, as though to say—

“You’re not out of *that* scrape, yet.”

Thus did we chat over our dinner, which was really excellent; the host’s eulogy on the Meuse trout being admirably sustained by their merits; nor did his flask of *Haut Brion* lower the character of his cellar. Still no note of preparation seemed to indicate any arrangements for our departure; and although, sooth to say, I could have reconciled myself wonderfully to the inconvenience of the Toison D’or for the whole week if necessary, Laura was becoming momentarily more impatient, as she said—

“Do see, if they are getting anything like a carriage ready, or even horses; we can ride, if they’ll only get us animals.”

As I entered the little kitchen of the inn, I found my host stretched at ease in a wicker chair, surrounded by a little atmosphere of smoke, through which his great round face loomed like

the moon in the grotesque engravings one sees in old spelling-books. So far from giving himself any unnecessary trouble about our departure, he had never ventured beyond the precincts of the stove, contenting himself with a wholesome monologue on the impossibility of our desires; and that great Flemish consolation, that however we might chafe at first, time would calm us in the end.

After a fruitless interrogation about the means of proceeding, I asked if there were no chateau in the vicinity, where horses could be borrowed?

He replied, "No, not one, for miles round."

"Is there no *maire* in the village—where is he?"

"I am the *maire*," replied he, with a conscious dignity.

Alas! thought I, as the functionary of Givét crossed my mind, why did I not remember that the *maire* is always the most stupid of the whole community.

"Then I think," said I, after a brief silence, "we had better see the Curé at once."

"I thought so," was the sententious reply.

Without troubling my head why he "thought

so," I begged that the Curé might be informed that a gentleman at the inn begged to speak with him for a few minutes.

"The Père José, I suppose?" said the host, significantly.

"With all my heart," said I; "José or Pierre, it's all alike to me."

"He is there in waiting this half-hour," said the host, pointing with his thumb to a small salon off the kitchen.

"Indeed!" said I; "how very polite the attention; I'm really most grateful."

With which, without delaying another moment, I pushed open the door and entered.

The Père José was a short, ruddy, astute-looking man of about fifty, dressed in the canonical habit of a Flemish priest, which, from time and wear, had lost much of its original freshness. He had barely time to unfasten a huge napkin which he had tied around his neck, during his devotion to a great mess of vegetable soup, when I made my bow to him.

"The Père José, I believe," said I, as I took my seat opposite to him.

“That unworthy priest!” said he, wiping his lips and throwing up his eyes with an expression not wholly devotional.

“Père José,” resumed I, “a young lady and myself, who have just arrived here with weary horses, stand in need of your kind assistance.” Here he pressed my hand gently, as if to assure me I was not mistaken in my man, and I went on: “We must reach Rochepied to-night; now will you try and assist us at this conjuncture? we are complete strangers.”

“Enough, enough!” said he. “I’m sorry you are constrained for time. This is a sweet little place for a few days’ sojourn. But if,” said he, “it can’t be, you shall have every aid in my power. I’ll send off to Poil de Vache for his mule and car. You don’t mind a little shaking,” said he, smiling.

“It’s no time to be fastidious, Père, and the lady is an excellent traveller.”

“The mule is a good beast, and will bring you in three hours, or even less.” So saying, he sat down and wrote a few lines on a scrap of paper, with which he dispatched a boy from the inn,

telling him to make every haste. "And now, monsieur, may I be permitted to pay my respects to mademoiselle?"

"Most certainly, Père José; she will be but too happy to add her thanks to mine for what you have done for us."

"Say rather, for what I am about to do," said he, smiling.

"The will is half the deed, father."

"A good adage, and an old," replied he, while he proceeded to arrange his drapery, and make himself as presentable as the nature of his costume would admit.

"This was a rapid business of yours," said he, as he smoothed down his few locks at the back of his head.

"That it was, Père,—a regular runaway."

"I guessed as much," said he. "I said so, the moment I saw you at the ferry."

The padre is no bad judge of horse-flesh, thought I, to detect the condition of our beasts at that distance.

"There's something for me," said I to Madame Guyon. "Look yonder! See how their cattle

are blowing! They've lost no time, and neither will I: and with that I put on my gown and came up here."

"How considerate of you, Père; you saw we should need your help."

"Of course I did," said he, chuckling. "Of course I did. Old Gregoire, here, is so stupid and so indolent that I have to keep a sharp look out myself. But he's the maire, and one can't quarrel with him."

"Very true," said I. "A functionary has a hundred opportunities of doing civil things, or the reverse."

"That's exactly the case," said the Père. "Without him we should have no law on our side. It would be all *sous la cheminée*, as they say."

The expression was new to me, and I imagined the good priest to mean, that without the magistrature, respect for the laws might as well be "up the chimney." "And, now, if you allow me, we'll pay our duty to the lady," said the Père José, when he had completed his toilette to his satisfaction.

When the ceremonial of presenting the Père

was over, I informed Laura of his great kindness in our behalf, and the trouble he had taken to provide us with an equipage.

“A sorry one, I fear, mademoiselle,” interposed he with a bow. “But I believe there are few circumstances in life where people are more willing to endure sacrifices.”

“Then monsieur has explained to you our position,” said Laura, half blushing at the absurdity of the adventure.

“Everything, my dear young lady, everything. Don't let the thought give you any uneasiness, however. I listen to stranger stories every day.”

“Taste that Haut-Brion, Père,” said I, wishing to give the conversation a turn, as I saw Laura felt uncomfortable, “and give me your opinion of it. To my judgment it seems excellent.”

“And your judgment is unimpeachable in more respects than that,” said the Père, with a significant look, which fortunately was not seen by mademoiselle.

Confound him, said I to myself; I must try another tack. “We were remarking, Père José, as we came along that very picturesque river, the

Chateau de Bouvigne—a fine thing in its time, it must have been.”

“You know the story, I suppose?” said the Père.

“Mademoiselle was relating it to me on the way, and indeed I am most anxious to hear the *dénouement*.”

“It was a sad one,” said he, slowly. “I’ll show you the spot where Henri fell—the stone that marks the place.”

“O Père José,” said Laura, “I must stop you—indeed I must—or the whole interest of my narrative will be ruined. You forget that monsieur has not heard the tale out.”

“Ah! *ma foi*, I beg pardon—a thousand pardons. Mademoiselle then knows Bouvigne?”

“I’ve been here once before, but only part of a morning. I’ve seen nothing but the outer court of the chateau and the *fosse du traître*.”

“So, so ; you know it all I perceive,” said he, smiling pleasantly. “Are you too much fatigued for a walk that far?”

“Shall we have time?” said Laura: “that’s the question.”

“Abundance of time. Jocot can't be here for an hour yet at soonest. And, if you allow me, I'll give all the necessary directions before we leave, so that you'll not be delayed ten minutes on your return.”

While Laura went in search of her hat, I again proffered my thanks to the kind Père for all his good nature, expressing the strong desire I felt for some opportunity of requital.

“Be happy,” said the good man, squeezing my hand affectionately; “that's the way you can best repay me.”

“It would not be difficult to follow the precept in your society, Père José,” said I, overcome by the cordiality of the old man's manner.

“I have made a great many so, indeed,” said he. “The five-and-thirty years I have lived in Bouvigne have not been without their fruit.”

Laura joined us here, and we took the way together towards the chateau, the priest discoursing all the way on the memorable features of the place, its remains of ancient grandeur and the picturesque beauty of its site.

As we ascended the steep path which, cut in the solid rock, leads to the chateau, groups of pretty children came flocking about us, presenting bouquets for our acceptance, and even scattering flowers in our path. This simple act of village courtesy struck us both much, and we could not help feeling touched by the graceful delicacy of the little ones, who tripped away ere we could reward them; neither could I avoid remarking to Laura on the perfect good understanding that seemed to subsist between Père José and the children of his flock—the paternal fondness on one side, and the filial reverence on the other. As we conversed thus, we came in front of a great arched doorway, in a curtain wall connecting two massive fragments of rock. In front lay a deep fosse, traversed by a narrow wall, scarce wide enough for one person to venture on. Below, the tangled weeds and ivy concealed the dark abyss, which was full eighty feet in depth.

“Look up, now,” said Laura, “you must bear the features of this spot in mind to understand the story. Don’t forget where that beam projects—do you mark it well?”

“He’ll get a better notion of it from the tower,” said the Père. “Shall I assist you across?”

Without any aid, however, Laura trod the narrow pathway, and hasted along up the steep and time-worn steps of the old tower. As we emerged upon the battlements we stood for a moment, overcome by the splendour of the prospect. Miles upon miles of rich landscape lay beneath us, glittering in the red, brown, and golden tints of autumn,—that gorgeous livery which the year puts on, ere it dons the sad-coloured mantle of winter. The great forest, too, was touched here and there with that light brown, the first advance of the season; while the river reflected every tint in its calm tide, as though it also would sympathise with the changes around it.

While the Père Jose continued to point out each place of mark or note in the vast plain, interweaving in his descriptions some chance bit of antiquarian or historic lore, we were forcibly struck by the thorough intimacy he possessed with all the features of the locality, and could not help complimenting him upon it.

“Yes, *ma foi*,” said he, “I know every rock and crevice, every old tree and rivulet for miles round. In the long life I have passed here, each day has brought me among those scenes with some traveller or other; and albeit they who visit us here have little thought for the picturesque, few are unmoved by this peaceful and lovely valley. You’d little suspect, mademoiselle, how many have passed through my hands here, in these five-and-thirty years. I keep a record of their names, in which I must beg you will kindly inscribe yours.”

Laura blushed at the proposition which should thus commemorate her misadventure; while I mumbled out something about our being mere passing strangers, unknown in the land.

“No matter for that,” replied the inexorable father. “I’ll have your names—ay, autographs too!”

“The sun seems very low,” said Laura, as she pointed to the west, where already a blaze of red golden light was spreading over the horizon: “I think we must hasten our departure.”

“Follow me, then,” said the Père, “and I’ll

conduct you by an easier path than we came up by." With that he unlocked a small postern in the curtain wall, and led us across a neatly-shaven lawn to a little barbican, where, again unlocking a door, we descended a flight of stone steps into a small garden terraced in the native rock. The labour of forming it must have been immense, as every shovel-full of earth was carried from the plain beneath; and here, were fruit-trees, and flowers, shrubs and plants, and in the midst, a tiny *jet d'eau*, which, as we entered, seemed magically to salute us with its refreshing splash. A little bench, commanding a view of the river from a different aspect, invited us to sit down for a moment. Indeed, each turn of the way seduced us by some new beauty, and we could have lingered on for hours. As for me, forgetful of the past, careless of the future, I was totally wrapped up in the enjoyment of the moment, and Laura herself seemed so enchanted by the spot that she sat, silently gazing on the tranquil scene, and apparently lost in delighted reverie. A low faint sigh escaped her as she looked; and I thought I could see a tremulous motion of her eyelid, as

though a tear were struggling within it: my heart beat powerfully against my side. I turned to see where was the Père. He had gone. I looked again, and saw him standing on a point of rock far beneath us, and waving his handkerchief as a signal to some one in the valley. Never was there such a situation as mine—never was mortal man so placed. I stole my hand carelessly along the bench till it touched hers, but she moved not away—no, her mind seemed quite pre-occupied. I had never seen her profile before, and truly it was very beautiful. All the vivacity of her temperament calmed down by the feeling of the moment, her features had that character of placid loveliness which seemed only wanting to make her perfectly handsome. I wished to speak, and could not. I felt that if I could have dared to say “Laura,” I could have gone on bravely afterwards,—but it would not come. “Amen stuck in my throat.” Twice I got half-way and covered my retreat by a short cough. Only think what a change in my destiny another syllable might have caused! It was exactly as my second effort proved fruitless, that a delicious sound of

music swelled up from the glen beneath, and floated through the air—a chorus of young voices singing what seemed to be a hymn. Never was any thing more charming. The notes, softened as they rose on high, seemed almost like a seraph's song—now raising the soul to high and holy thoughts—now thrilling within the heart with a very ecstasy of delight.

At length they paused, the last cadence melted slowly away, and all was still—we did not dare to move—when Laura touched my hand gently and whispered :—

“Hark ! there it is again :” and at the instant the voices broke forth, but into a more joyous measure. It was one of those sweet peasant-carolings which breathe of the light heart and the simple life of the cottage.

The words came nearer and nearer as we listened, and at length I could trace the *refrain* which closed each verse.

“Puisque l’herbe et la fleur parlent mieux que les mots
Puisque un aveu d’amour s’exhale de la rose,
Que le ‘ne m’oublie pas’ de souvenir s’arrose,
Que le laurier dit Glorie ! et cyprès sanglots.”

At last the wicket of the garden slowly opened, and a little procession of young girls, all dressed in white, with white roses in their hair, and carrying bouquets each in their hands, entered, and with steady step came forward. We watched them attentively, believing that they were celebrating some little devotional pilgrimage, when, to our surprise, they approached where we sat, and with a low courtesy, each dropped her bouquet at Laura's feet, whispering in a low silver voice as they passed—"May thy feet always tread upon flowers."

Ere we could speak our surprise and admiration of this touching scene, for it was such, in all its simplicity, they were gone, and the last notes of their chant were dying away in the distance.

"How beautiful, how very beautiful," said Laura; "I shall never forget this."

"Nor I," said I, making a desperate effort at, I know not what, avowal, which the appearance of the Père at once put to flight. He had just seen the boy returning along the river side with the mule and cart, and came to apprise us that we had better descend.

“It will be very late indeed before we reach Dinant; we shall scarcely get there before midnight.”

“Oh, you’ll be there much earlier; it is now past six; in less than ten minutes you can be *en route*. I shall not cause you much delay.”

Ah, thought I, the good father is still dreaming about his album; we must indulge his humour, which, after all, is but a poor requital for all his politeness.

As we entered the parlour of the Toison D’Or, we found the host in all the bravery of his Sunday suit, with a light brown wig, and stockings, blue as the heaven itself, standing waiting our arrival. The hostess, too, stood at the other side of the door, in the full splendour of a great quilted *jupe*, and a cap, whose ears descended half way to her waist. On the table in the middle of the room, were two wax candles, of that portentous size that we see in chapels. Between them, there lay a great open volume, which at a glance I guessed to be the priest’s album. Not comprehending what the worthy host and hostess meant by their

presence, I gave a look of interrogation to the Père, who quickly whispered—

“Oh, it is nothing; they are only the witnesses.”

I could not help laughing outright at the idea of this formality, nor could Laura refrain either, when I explained to her what they came for. However, time passed—the jingle of the bells on the mules' harness warned us that our equipage waited; and, I dipped the pen in the ink, and handed it to Laura.

“I wish he could excuse me from performing this ceremony,” said she holding back; “I really am quite enough ashamed already.”

“What says mademoiselle?” inquired the Père, as she spoke in English.

I translated her remark, when he broke in—

“Oh, you must comply; it's only a formality, but still every one does it.”

“Come, come,” said I, in English; “indulge the old man; he is evidently bent on this whim, and let us not leave him disappointed.”

“Be it so, then,” said she; “on your head, Mr. O'Leary, be the whole of this day's indiscretion;”

and so saying she took the pen and wrote her name, "Laura Alicia Muddleton."

"Now, then, for my turn," said I, advancing; but the Père took the pen from her fingers, and proceeded carefully to dry the writing with a scrap of blotting paper.

"On this side, monsieur," said he turning over the page; we do the whole affair in orderly fashion, you see; put your name, there, with the date, and the day of the week."

"Will that do?" said I, as I pushed over the book towards him, where certainly the least imposing specimen of caligraphy the volume contained, now stood confessed.

"What a droll name," said the priest, as he peered at it through his spectacles. "How do you pronounce it?"

While I endeavoured to indoctrinate the father into the mystery of my Irish appellation, the maire and the mayoress had, both, appended their signatures on either page.

"Well, I suppose now we may depart at last," said Laura; "it's getting very late."

"Yes," said I aloud; "we must take the road

now; there is nothing more, I fancy, Père José?"

"Yes; but there is, though," said he laughing——

But, at the same moment, the galloping of horses and the crash of wheels were heard without, and a carriage drew up in the street—down went the steps with a crash—several people rushed along the little gallery till the very house shook with their tread. The door of the *salon* was now banged wide, and in, rushed, Colonel Muddleton, followed by the count, the abbé, and an elderly lady.

"Where is he?"—"Where is she?"—"Where is he?"—"Where is she?"—"Where are they?" screamed they in confusion, one after the other.

"Laura, Laura," cried the old colonel, clasping his daughter in his arms, "I didn't expect this from you."

"Monsieur O'Leary, vous etes un——"

Before the count could finish, the abbé interposed between us, and said:—

"No, no! Everything may be arranged. Tell me, in one word, is it over?"

"Is what over?" said I, in a state two degrees worse than insanity; "is what over?"

"Are you married?" whispered he.

"No: bless your heart—never thought of it."

"Oh the wretch!" screamed the old lady, and went off into strong kickings on the sofa.

"It's a bad affair," said the abbé in a low voice; "take my advice—propose to marry her at once."

"Yes, *parbleu*!" said the little count, twisting his moustaches in a fierce manner; "there is but one road to take here."

Now, though unquestionably but half an hour before, when seated beside the lovely Laura in the garden of the chateau, such a thought would have filled me with delight, now, the same proposition, accompanied by a threat, stirred up all my indignation and resistance.

"Not on compulsion," said Sir John; and truly there was reason in the speech.

But, indeed, before I could reply, the attentions of all were drawn towards Laura herself, who from laughing violently at first, had now become hysterical, and continued to laugh and cry at

intervals; and as the old lady continued her manipulations with a candle-stick on an oak table near, while the colonel shouted for various unattainable remedies at the top of his voice, the scene was anything but decorous,—the abbé, who alone seemed to preserve his sanity, having as much as he could do to prevent the little count from strangling me with his own hands—such, at least, his violent gestures seemed to indicate. As for the priest, and the maire, and the she maire, they had all fled long before. There appeared now but one course for me, which was to fly also. There was no knowing what intemperance the count might not commit, under his present excitement. It was clear they were all labouring under a delusion, which nothing at the present moment could elucidate. A nod from the abbé and a motion towards the open door decided my wavering resolution. I rushed out, over the gallery, and down the road, not knowing whither, nor caring.

I might as well try to chronicle the sensations of my raving intellect, in my first fever in boyhood, as convey any notion of what passed through my brain for the next two hours. I sat

on a rock beside the river, vainly endeavouring to collect my scattered thoughts, which only presented to me a vast chaos of a wood and a crusader, a priest and a lady, veal cutlets and music, a big book, an old lady in fits, and a man in sky-blue stockings. The rolling of a carriage with four horses, near me, aroused me for a second, but I could not well say why, and all was again still, and I sat there alone.

“He must be somewhere near this,” said a voice, as I heard the tread of footsteps approaching: “this is his hat. Ah, here he is!” At the same moment the abbé stood beside me.

“Come along, now; don’t stay here in the cold,” said he, taking me by the arm. “They’ve all gone home two hours ago. I have remained to ride back the nag in the morning.”

I followed without a word.

“*Ma foi!*” said he, “it is the first occasion in my life where I could not see my way through a difficulty. What, in heaven’s name, were you about? What was your plan?”

“Give me half an hour in peace,” said I, “and if I’m not deranged before it’s over, I’ll tell you.”

The abbé complied, and I fulfilled my promise—though, in good sooth, the shouts of laughter with which he received my story caused many an interruption. When I had finished, he began, and leisurely proceeded to inform me that Bouvigne's great celebrity was as a place for run-away couples to get married; that the inn of the Golden Fleece was known over the whole kingdom, and the Père José's reputation wide as the Archbishop of Ghent's; and as to the phrase, "*sous la cheminée*," it is only applied to a clandestine marriage, which is called a "*márriage sous la cheminée*."

"Now I," continued he, "can readily believe every word you've told me, yet, there's not another person in Rochepied would credit a syllable of it. Never hope for an explanation. In fact, before you were listened to, there are at least two duels to fight—the count first, and then D'Espagne. I know Laura well—she'll let the affair have all its *éclat* before she will say a word about it; and in fact, your executors may be able to clear your character—you'll never do so in your lifetime. Don't go back there," said the abbé, "at least for the present."

"I'll never set eyes on one of them," cried I, in desperation; "I'm nigh deranged as it is—the memory of this confounded affair——"

"Will make you laugh yet," said the abbé. "And now good-night, or rather good-by—I start early to-morrow morning, and we may not meet again."

He promised to forward my effects to Dinant, and we parted.

"Monsieur will have a single bed?" said the housemaid, in answer to my summons.

"Yes," said I, with a muttering, I fear very like an oath.

Morning broke in through the half-closed curtains, with the song of birds, and the ripple of the gentle river. A balmy air stirred the leaves, and the sweet valley lay in all its peaceful beauty before me.

"Well, well," said I, rubbing my eyes, "it was a queer adventure; and there's no saying what might have happened, had they been only ten minutes later. I'd give a Napoleon to know what *Laura* thinks of it now. But I must not delay here—the very villagers will laugh at me."

I ate my breakfast rapidly, and called for my bill. The sum was a mere trifle, and I was just adding something to it, when a knock came to the door.

"Come in," said I, and the Père entered.

"How sadly unfortunate," began he, when I interrupted him at once, by assuring him of his mistake; that we were no run-away couple at all, had not the most remote idea of being married, and in fact owed our whole disagreeable adventure to his ridiculous misconception.

"It's very well to say that *now*," growled out the Père, in a very different accent from his former one. "You may pretend what you like, but," and he spoke in a determined tone, "you'll pay *my* bill."

"*Your* bill!" said I, waxing wroth. "What have I had from you—how am I your debtor? I should like to hear."

"And you shall," said he, drawing forth a long document from a pocket in his cassock. "Here it is." He handed me the paper, of which the following is a transcript:—

Noces de Mi Lord O'Leary et Mademoiselle Mi Lady de
Muddleton.

FRANCS.

| | | |
|---|----|----|
| Two conversations—preliminary, admonitory, and consolatory | 10 | 0 |
| Advice to the young couple, with moral maxims interspersed | 3 | 0 |
| Soirée, and society at wine | 5 | 0 |
| Guide to the Chateau, with details artistic, and antiquarian | 12 | 0 |
| Eight Children with flowers, at half a franc each | 4 | 0 |
| Fees at the Chateau | 2 | 0 |
| Chorus of Virgins, at one franc per virgin .. | 10 | 0 |
| Roses for Virgins | 2 | 10 |
| M. le Maire et Madame “en grande tenue” .. | 1 | 0 |
| Book of Registry, setting forth the date of the Marriage—— | | |

“The devil take it,” said I; “it was no marriage at all.”

“Yes, but it was though,” said he. “It’s your own fault if you can’t take care of your wife.”

The noise of his reply brought the host and hostess to the scene of action; and though I resisted manfully for a time, there was no use in prolonging a hopeless contest, and with a melan-

choly sigh, I disbursed my wedding expenses, and with a hearty malediction on Bouvigne, its chateau—its inn—its Père—its maire—and its virgins—I took the road towards Namur, and never lifted my head, till I had left the place miles behind me.



CHAPTER XVI.

A MOUNTAIN ADVENTURE.

It was growing late on a fine evening of autumn, as, a solitary pedestrian, I drew near the little town of Spa. From the time of my leaving Chaude Fontaine, I lingered along the road, enjoying to the utmost the beautiful valley of the Vesdre, and sometimes half hesitating whether I would not loiter away some days in one of the little villages I passed, and see if the trout, whose circling eddies marked the stream, might not rise as favourably to my fly as to the vagrant insect that now flitted across the water.

In good sooth, I wished for rest, and I wished for solitude; too much of my life latterly had been passed in salons and soirées—the peaceful habit of my soul, the fruit of my own lonely hours—had suffered grievous inroads by my partnership with the world; and I deemed it essential

to be once more apart from the jarring influences and distracting casualties, which every step in life is beset by, were it only to recover again my habitual tranquillity; to refit the craft, ere she took the sea once more.

I wanted but little to decide my mind—the sight of an inn, some picturesque spot, a pretty face, anything, in short, would have sufficed; but somehow, I suppose I must have been more fastidious than I knew of; for I continued to walk onward, and at last, leaving the little hamlet of Pepinsterre behind me, set out with brisker pace towards Spa.

The air was calm and balmy; no leaf stirred; the river beside the road did not even murmur, but crept silently along its gravelly bed, fearful to break the stillness. Gradually the shadows fell stronger and broader, and at length mingled into one broad expanse of gloom; and in a few minutes more it was night.

There is something very striking, I had almost said saddening, in the sudden transition from day to darkness, in those countries where no twilight exists. The gradual change, by which road and

mountain, rock and cliff, mellow into the hues of sunset, and grow grey in the "gloaming," deepening the shadows, and by degrees losing all outline in the dimness around, prepares us for the gloom of night. We feel it like the tranquil current of years, marking some happy life, where childhood and youth, and manhood and age, succeed in measured time. Not so the sudden and immediate change, which seems rather like the stroke of some fell misfortune, converting the cheerful hours into dark brooding melancholy. Years may, they do, fall lightly on some; they creep with noiseless step, and youth and age glide softly into each other, without any shock to awaken the thought that says—Adieu to this!—Farewell to that for ever! Others, again, not less happy, feel the touch of time telling on the impressions and the hopes of their youth; they recognize the changes in themselves, as years flow past, and these starlight hours of reflection are among their choicest blessings.

Thus was I musing, when suddenly I found myself at the spot where the road branched off in two directions. No house, not a living thing

near, from whom I could ask the way. I endeavoured by the imperfect light of the stars—for there was no moon—to ascertain which road seemed most frequented, and travelled, judging that Spa was the most likely resort of all journeying in these parts; but, unhappily, I could detect no difference to guide me; there were wheel-tracks in both, and ruts and stones tolerably equitably adjusted; each had a pathway, too, the right-hand road enjoying a slight superiority over the other, in this respect, as its path was more even.

I was completely puzzled. Had I been mounted, I had left the matter to my horse; but, unhappily, my decision had not a particle of reason to guide it. I looked from the road to the trees, and from the trees to the stars, but they looked down as tranquilly as though either way would do—all save one—a sly little brilliant spangle in the south, that seemed to wink at my difficulty. “No matter,” said I, “one thing is certain; neither a supper nor a bed will come to look for me here, and so now for the best pathway, as I begin to feel foot-sore.”

My momentary embarrassment about the road completely routed all my musings, and I now turned my thoughts to the comforts of the inn, and the pleasant little supper I promised myself on reaching it. I debated about what was in season, and what was not; I spelled October twice to ascertain if oysters were in, and there came a doubt across me whether the Flemish name for the month might have an *r* in it, and then I laughed at my own bull; afterwards I disputed with myself as to the relative merits of Chablis and Hocheimer, and resolved to be guided by the garçon. I combatted long a weakness I felt growing over me—for a pint of mulled claret, as the air was now becoming fresh; but I gave in at last, and began to hammer my brain for the French words for cloves and nutmeg.

In these innocent ruminations did an hour pass by, and yet no sign of human habitation, no sound of life, could I perceive at either side of me. The night, 'tis true, was brighter as it became later, and there were stars in thousands in the sky; but I would gladly have exchanged Venus for the chamber-maid of the humblest auberge,

and given the Great Bear himself for a single slice of bacon. At length, after about two hours' walking, I remarked that the road was becoming much more steep; indeed, it had presented a continual ascent for some miles, but now the activity was very considerable, particularly at the close of a long day's march; I remembered well that Spa lay in a valley, but for the life of me, I could not think whether a mountain was to be crossed to arrive there. "That comes of travelling by post," said I to myself; "had I walked the road, I had never forgotten so remarkable a feature." While I said this, I could not help confessing that I had as lieve my present excursion had been also in a conveyance. "Forwärts! fort, und Immer fort!" hummed I, remembering Körner's song, and taking it for my motto, and on I went at a good pace. It needed all my powers, as a pedestrian, however, to face the mountain—for such I could see it was that I was now ascending—the pathway, too, less trodden than below, was encumbered with loose stones, and the trees which lined the way on either side, gradually became thinner and rarer, and at last

ceased altogether, exposing me to the cold blast, which swept from time to time across the barren heath, with a chill that said October was own brother to November. Three hours and a half did I toil along, and at last the conviction came before me that I must have taken the wrong road. This could not possibly be the way to Spa; indeed, I had great doubts that it led anywhere; I mounted upon a little rock, and took a survey of the bleak mountain side; but nothing could I see that indicated that the hand of man had ever laboured in that wild region. Fern and heath, clumps of gorse and misshapen rocks, diversified the barren surface on every side, and I now seemed to have gained the summit, a vast tableland spreading away for miles. I sat down to consider what was best to be done; the thought of retracing so many leagues of way was very depressing, and yet what were my chances if I went forward?

Ah! thought I, why did not some benevolent individual think of erecting light-houses inland? What a glorious invention would it have been—just think of the great mountain districts which

lie in the very midst of civilization, pathless, trackless, and unknown—where a benighted traveller may perish, within the very sound of succour, if he but knew where to seek it. How cheering to the way-worn traveller as he plodded along his weary road, to lift from time to time his eyes to the guide-star in the distance. Had the monks been in the habit of going out in the dark, there's little doubt they'd have persuaded some good Catholics to endow some institutions like this. How well they knew how to have their chapels and convents erected! I'm not sure but I'd vow a little light-house, myself, to the Virgin, if I could only catch a glimpse of a gleam of light this moment.

Just then, I thought I saw something twinkle, far away, across the heath: I climbed up on the rock, and looked steadily in the direction—there was no doubt of it—there was a light—no Jack-o'-Lantern either,—but a good, respectable light, of domestic habits, shining steadily and brightly. It seemed far off, but there is nothing so deceptive as the view over a flat surface. In any case, I resolved to make for it—and so,

seizing my staff, I once more set forward; unhappily, however, I soon perceived that the road led off in a direction exactly the reverse of the object I sought, and I was now obliged to make my choice of quitting the path, or abandoning the light; my resolve was quickly made, and I started off across the plain, with my eyes steadily fixed upon my beacon.

The mountain was marshy and wet, that wearisome surface of spongy hillock, and low, creeping brushwood, the most fatal thing to a tired walker, and I made but slow progress; besides frequently, from inequalities of the soil, I would lose sight of the light for half an hour together, and then, on its reappearing suddenly, discover how far I had wandered out of the direct line. These little aberrations did not certainly improve my temper, and I plodded along, weary of limb, and out of spirits.

At length I came to the verge of a declivity; beneath me, lay a valley, winding and rugged, with a little torrent brawling through rocks and stones—a wild and gloomy scene, by the imperfect light of the stars. On the opposite

mountain stood the coveted light, which now I could discover, proceeded from a building of some size, at least so far as I could pronounce from the murky shadow against the back-ground of sky.

I summoned up one great effort, and pushed down the slope; now sliding on hands and feet, now trusting to a run of some yards where the ground was more feasible. After a fatiguing course of two hours, I reached the crest of the opposite hill, and stood within a few hundred yards of the house—the object of my wearisome journey.

It was indeed in keeping with the deserted wildness of the place. A ruined tower, one of those square keeps, which formerly, were intended as frontier defences, standing on a rocky base, beside the edge of a steep cliff, had been made a dwelling of by some solitary herdsman, for so the sheep, collected within a little inclosure, bespoke him. The rude efforts to make the place habitable, were conspicuous in the door formed of wooden planks nailed coarsely together, and the window, whose panes were made of a thin sub-

stance, like parchment, through which, however, the blaze of a fire shone brightly without.

Creeping carefully forward to take a reconnoissance of the interior before I asked for admission, I approached a small aperture, where a single pane of glass permitted a view: a great heap of blazing furze that filled the old chimney of the tower, lit up the whole space, and enabled me to see a man who sat on a log of wood beside the hearth, with his head bent upon his knees. His dress was a coarse blouse of striped woollen, descending to his knees, where a pair of gaiters of sheepskin were fastened by thongs of untanned leather—his head was bare, and covered only by a long mass of black hair, that fell in tangled locks down his back, and even over his face, as he bent forward. A shepherd's staff, and a broad hat of felt, lay on the ground beside him; there was neither chair nor table, nor, save some fern in one corner, anything that might serve as a bed; a large earthenware jug, and a metal pot, stood near the fire, and a knife, such as butchers kill with—beside them. Over the chimney, however, was suspended by two thongs of leather, a sword,



John Brown & Co.

long and straight, like the weapon of the heavy cavalry of France, and, higher again, I could see a great piece of printed paper was fastened to the wall. As I continued to scan, one by one, these signs of utter poverty, the man stretched out his limbs, and rubbed his eyes for a minute or two, and then with a start sprang to his feet, displaying as he did so, the proportions of a most powerful and athletic frame. He was, as well as I could guess, about forty-five years of age, but hardship and suffering had worn deep lines about his face, which was sallow and emaciated. A black moustache, that hung down over his lip, and descended to his chin, concealed the lower part of his face—the upper was bold and manly, the forehead, high, and well developed—but his eyes—and I could mark them, well as the light fell on him—were of an unnatural brilliancy—their sparkle had the fearful gleam of a mind diseased, and in their quick, restless glances, through the room, I saw that he was labouring under some insane delusion. He paced the room with a steady step, backwards and forwards, for a few minutes, and once, as he lifted his eyes

above the chimney, he stopped abruptly, and carried his hand to his forehead in a military salute, while he muttered something to himself; the moment after, he threw open the door, and stepping outside, gave a long, shrill whistle; he paused for a few seconds, and repeated it, when I could hear the distant barking of a dog, replying to his call. Just then he turned abruptly, and with a spring, seized me by the arm.

“Who are you—what do you want here?” said he, in a voice tremulous with passion.

A few words—it was no time for long explanations—told him how I had lost my way in the mountain, and was in search of shelter for the night.

“It was a lucky thing for you that one of my lambs was astray,” said he, with a fierce smile. “If Tête-noire had been at home, he’d have made short work of you—come in.”

With that he pushed me before him into the tower, and pointed to the block of wood, where he had been sitting previously, while he threw a fresh supply of furze upon the hearth, and stirred up the blaze with his foot.

“The wind is moving round to the south’ard,” said he; “we’ll have a heavy fall of rain soon.”

“The stars look very bright, however——”

“Never trust them—before day breaks, you’ll see the mountain will be covered with mist.”

As he spoke he crossed his arms on his breast, and recommenced his walk up and down the chamber. The few words he spoke surprised me much by the tones of his voice—so unlike the accents I should have expected from one of his miserable and squalid appearance—they were mild, and bore the traces of one who had seen very different fortunes from his present ones.

I wished to speak and induce him to converse with me, but the efforts I made seemed only to excite his displeasure, and I abandoned the endeavour with a good grace, and having disposed my knapsack as a pillow, stretched myself full length before the hearth, and fell sound asleep.

When I awoke, the shepherd was not to be seen; the fire, which blazed brightly, showed, however, that he had not long been absent; a huge log of beech had recently been thrown upon it. The day was breaking, and I went to the

door to look out; nothing, however, could I see; vast clouds of mist were sweeping along before the wind, that sighed mournfully over the bleak mountains, and concealed everything a few yards off, while a thin rain came slanting down, the prelude to the storm the shepherd had prophesied.

Never was there anything more dreary, within or without; the miserable poverty of the ruined tower was scarcely a shelter from the coming hurricane. I returned to my place beside the fire, sad and low in heart. While I was conjecturing within myself what distance I might be from Spa, and how I could contrive to reach it, I chanced to fix my eyes on the sabre above the chimney, which I took down to examine. It was a plain straight weapon, of the kind carried by the soldiery—its only sign of inscription was the letter N on the blade. As I replaced it, I caught sight of the printed paper, which, begrimed with smoke, and partly obliterated by time, was nearly illegible. After much pains, however, I succeeded in deciphering the following—it was headed in large letters:

“Ordre du Jour, de l'Armée Française.

“Le 9 Thermidor.”

The lines which followed immediately, were covered by another piece of paper, pasted over them, where I could just here and there detect a stray word, which seemed to indicate that the whole bore reference to some victory of the republican army; the last four lines, much clearer than the rest, ran thus:

“Le citoyen Aubuisson, chef de bataillon de Grenadiers, de cette demi-brigade, s'est entré le premier dans la redoute. Il a eu son habit criblé de balles.”

I read and re-read the lines a dozen times over—indeed to this hour are they fast fixed in my memory. Some strange mystery seemed to connect them with the poor shepherd—otherwise, why were they here? I thought over his figure, strong and well knit, as I saw him stand upright in the room, and of his military salute; and the conviction came fully over me, that the miserable creature, covered with rags, and struggling with want, was no other than the citizen Aubuisson.

Yet, by what fearful vicissitude had he fallen to this? The wild expression of his features at times, did indeed look like insanity, still what he said to me was both calm and coherent—the mystery excited all my curiosity, and I longed for his return, in the hope of detecting some clue to it.

The door opened suddenly, a large dog, more mastiff than sheep dog, dashed in; seeing me, he retreated a step, and fixing his eyes steadily upon me, gave a fearful howl. I could not stir from fear—I saw that he was preparing for a spring, when the voice of the shepherd called out, “Couche toi, Tête-noire, couche!” The savage beast at once slunk quietly to a corner, and lay down, still never taking his eyes from me, and seeming as if his services would soon be in request in my behalf, while his master shook the rain from his hat and blouse, and came forward to dry himself at the fire. Fixing his eyes steadfastly on the red embers, as he stirred them with his foot, he muttered some few and broken words, among which, although I listened attentively, I could but hear “Pas un mot—silence—silence, à la mort!”

"You were not wrong in your prophecy, shepherd; the storm is setting in already," said I, wishing to attract his attention.

"Hush!" said he, in a low whisper, while he motioned me with his hand to be still, "hush—not a word!"

The eager glare of madness was in his eye as he spoke, and a tremulous movement of his pale cheek betokened some great inward convulsion; he threw his eyes slowly around the miserable room, looking below and above with the scrutinizing glance of one resolved to let nothing escape his observation, and then kneeling down on one knee beside the blaze, he took a piece of dry wood, and stole it quietly among the embers.

"There, there!" cried he, springing to his legs, while he seized me rudely by the shoulder, and hurried me to the distant end of the room. "Come—quickly—stand back—stand back there—see—see," said he, as the crackling sparks flew up and the tongued flame rose in the chimney, "there it goes!" then putting his lips to my ears he muttered, "Not a word!—silence—silence to the death!"

As he said this, he drew himself up to his full height, and crossing his arms upon his breast, stood firm and erect before me, and certainly—covered with rags the meanest poverty would have rejected, shrunk by famine, and chilled by hunger and storm—there was still remaining the traits of a once noble face and figure. The fire of madness, unquenched by every misery, lit up his dark eye, and even on his compressed lip, there was a curl of pride. Poor fellow! some pleasant memory seemed to flit across him, he smiled, and as he moved his hair from his forehead he bowed his head slightly, and murmured “Oui, Sire!” How soft, how musical, that voice was then. Just at this instant, the deep bleating of the sheep was heard without, and Tête-noire springing up, rushed to the door, and scratched fiercely with his fore paws. The shepherd hastened to open it, and to my surprise, I beheld a boy, about twelve years of age, poorly clad and dripping with wet, who was carrying a small canvass bag on his back.

“Has the lamb been found, Lazare?” said the child, as he unslung his little sack.

"Yes, 'tis safe in the fold."

"And the spotted ewe—you don't think the wolves could have taken her away so early as this——"

"Hush, hush!" said the shepherd, with a warning gesture to the child, who seemed at once to see that the lunatic's vision was on him, for he drew his little blouse close around his throat, and muttered a "Bon jour, Lazare," and departed.

"Couldn't that boy guide me down to Spa, or some village near it?" said I, anxious to seize an opportunity of escape.

He looked at me without seeming to understand my question. I repeated it more slowly, when, as if suddenly aware of my meaning, he replied quickly,

"No, no, little Pierre has a long road to go home; he lives far away in the mountains; I'll show you the way myself."

With that he opened the sack, and took forth a loaf of coarse wheaten bread, such as the poorest cottagers make, and a tin flask of milk. Tearing the loaf asunder, he handed me one half, which, more from policy than hunger, though I

had endured a long fast, I accepted. Then passing the milk towards me, he made a sign for me to drink, and when I had done, seized the flask himself, and nodding gaily with his head, cried "A vous, camarade." Simple as the gesture, and few the words, they both convinced me that he had been a soldier once, and each moment only strengthened me in the impression that I had before me in the shepherd Lazare, an officer of the Grande Armée; one of those heroes of a hundred fights, whose glory was the tributary stream in the great ocean of the Empire's grandeur.

Our meal was soon concluded, and in silence; and Lazare, having replenished his fire, went to the door and looked out.

"It will be wilder ere night," said he, as he peered into the dense mist, which, pressed down by rain, lay like a pall upon the earth; "if you are a good walker I'll take you by a short way to Spa."

"I'll do my best," said I, "to follow you."

"The mountain is easy enough, but there may be a stream or two swollen by the rains—they are sometimes dangerous."

“What distance are we then from Spa?”

“Four leagues and a half by the nearest route—seven and half by the road. Come, Tête-noire—bonne bête,” said he, patting the savage beast, who with a rude gesture of his tail, evinced his joy at the recognition. “Thou must be on guard to-day—take care of these for me—that thou wilt, old fellow—keep them from the pic—farewell, good beast, good bye!” The animal, as if he understood every word, stood with his red eyes fixed upon him till he had done, and then answered by a long, low howl. Lazare smiled with pleasure, as he waved his hand towards him, and led the way from the tower.

I had but time to leave two louisd'ors on the block of wood, when he called out to me to follow him. The pace he walked at, as well as the rugged course of the way he took, prevented my keeping at his side; and I could only track him as he moved along through the misty rain, like some genius of the storm, his long locks flowing wildly behind him, and his tattered garments fluttering in the wind.

It was a toilsome and a dreary march, unre

lieved by aught to lessen the fatigue. Lazare never spoke one word the entire time—occasionally he would point with his staff to the course we were to take, or mark the flight of some great bird of prey, soaring along near the ground, as if fearless of man in regions so wild and desolate: save at these moments, he seemed buried in his own gloomy thoughts. Four hours of hard walking brought us at last to the summit of a great mountain, from which, as the mist was considerably cleared away, I could perceive a number of lesser mountains surrounding it, like the waves of the sea. My guide pointed to the ground, as if recommending a rest, and I willingly threw myself on the heath, damp and wet as it was.

The rest was a short one: he soon motioned me to resume the way, and we plodded onward for an hour longer, when we came to a great tableland of several miles in extent, but which still I could perceive was on a very high level. At last we reached a little grove of stunted pines, where a rude cross of stone stood—a mark to commemorate the spot where a murder had been com-

mitted, and to entreat prayers for the discovery of the murderers. Here Lazare stopped, and pointing to a little narrow path in the heather, he said—

“Spa is scarce two leagues distant—it lies in the valley yonder—follow this path, and you’ll not fail to reach it.”

While I proffered my thanks to him for his guidance, I could not help expressing my wish to make some slight return for it. A dark, disdainful look soon stopped me in my speech, and I turned it off, in a desire to leave some souvenir of my night’s lodging behind me, in the old tower. But even this he would not hear of, and when I stretched out my hand to bid him good-bye, he took it with a cold and distant courtesy, as though he were condescending to a favour he had no fancy for.

“Adieu, monsieur,” said I, still tempted, by a last effort of allusion to his once condition, to draw something from him ; “adieu!”

He approached me nearer, and with a voice of tremulous eagerness, he muttered—

“Not a word yonder—not a syllable—pledge me your faith in that!”

Thinking now that it was merely the recurrence of his paroxysm, I answered carelessly,

“Never fear, I’ll say nothing.”

“Yes, but swear it,” said he, with a fixed look of his dark eye; “swear it to me now—so long as you are below there,”—he pointed to the valley—“you never speak of me.”

I made him the promise he required, though with great unwillingness, as my curiosity to learn something about him was becoming intense.

“Pas un mot!” said he, with a finger on his lip, “that’s the ‘consigne.’”

“Pas un mot!” repeated I, and we parted.

CHAPTER XVII.

S P A.

Two hours after, I was enjoying the pleasant fire of the Hotel de Flandre, where I arrived in time for *table d'hôte*, not a little to the surprise of the host and six waiters, who were totally lost in conjectures to account for my route, and sorely puzzled to ascertain the name of my last hotel in the mountains.

A watering-place at the close of a season is always a sad-looking thing. The barricades of the coming winter already begin to show—the little statues in public gardens are assuming their great coats of straw against the rigours of frost—the *jet d'eaux* cease to play, or perform with the unwilling air of actors to empty benches—the *table d'hôtes* present their long dinner rooms unoccupied, save by a little table at one end, where some half-dozen shivering inmates still remain,

the “debris” of the mighty army who flourished their knives there but six weeks before. These usually consist of a stray invalid or two, completing his course of the waters—he has a fortnight of sulphuretted hydrogen before him yet, and he dare not budge till he has finished his “heel-tap” of abomination. Then there’s the old half-pay major, that has lived in Spa, for aught I know, since the siege of Namur, and who passes his nine months of winter shooting quails and playing dominoes; and there’s an elderly lady, with spectacles, always working at a little embroidery frame, who speaks no French, nor seems to be aware of any thing going on around her. No one can guess why she is there—I wager she does not know herself; and lastly, there is a very distracted ennyée-looking young gentleman, with a shooting jacket, and young moustaches, who having “been cleaned” out at *rouge et noir*, is waiting in the hope of a remittance from some commiserating relative in England.

The theatre is closed—its little stars, dispersed among the small capitals, have shrunk back to their former proportions of third and fourth-rate

parts—for though butterflies in July, they are mere grubs in December. While the clink of the croupier's mace no longer is heard, revelling amid the five-franc pieces, all is still and silent in that room which so late the conflict of human passion, hope, envy, fear, and despair, had made a very hell on earth.

The donkeys too—who but the other day were decked in scarlet trappings—are now despoiled of their gay panoply, and condemned to the mean drudgery of the cart. Poor beasts! their drooping ears and fallen heads, seem to show some sense of their changed fortunes. No longer bearing the burden of some fair-cheeked girl, or laughing boy, along the mountain side—they are brought down to the daily labour of the cottage; and a cutlet is no more like a mutton chop, than is a donkey like an ass. So does everything suffer a “sea-change.” The “Modiste,” whose pretty cap with its gay ribbons, was itself an advertisement of her wares, has taken to a close bonnet and a woollen shawl—a metamorphosis as complete as is the misshapen mass of cloaks and mud-boats of the agile “danseuse,” who flitted

between earth and air, a few moments before. Even the Doctor—and what a study is the doctor of a watering place?—even he has laid by his smiles and his soft speeches, folded up in the same drawer with his black coat, for winter. He has not thrown physic to the dogs, because he is fond of sporting, and would not injure the poor beasts, but he has given it an “au revoir;” and as grouse come in with autumn, and black cock in November, so does he feel chalybeates are in season on the first of May. Exchanging his cane for a Manton, and his mild whisper for a dog whistle, he takes to the pursuit of the lower animals, leaving men for the warmer months.

All this disconcerts one; you hate to be present at those “déménagements,” where the curtains are taking down, and the carpet is taking up; where they are nailing canvass across pictures, and storing books into pantries. These smaller revolutions are all very detestable, and you gladly escape into some quiet and retired spot and wait till the fussing be over. So felt I. Had I come a month later, this place would have suited me per-

fectly, but this process of human moulting is horrible to witness, and so, say I once more,—*en route*.

Like the Dutchman who took a run of three miles to jump over a hill, and then set down tired at the foot of it, I flurried myself so completely in canvassing all the possible places I might, could, would, should, or ought to pass the winter in, that I actually took a fortnight to recover my energies before I could set out. Meanwhile, I had made a close friendship with a dyspeptic countryman of mine, who went about the Continent with a small portmanteau and a very large medicine chest, chasing health from Naples to Paris, and from Aix-la-Chapelle to Wildbad, firmly persuaded that every country had only one month in the year, at most, wherein it were safe to live there—Spa being the appropriate place to pass the October. He cared nothing for the ordinary topics that engross the attention of mankind—Kings might be dethroned and dynasties demolished—states might revolt and subjects be rebellious—all he wanted to know was, not what changes were made in the Code but in the Pharmacopœia. The liberty of the

press was a matter of indifference to him; he cared little for what men might say, but a great deal for what it was safe to swallow, and looked upon the inventor of blue pill as the greatest benefactor of mankind. He had the analysis of every well and spring in Germany at his finger's end, and could tell you the temperature and atomic proportions like his alphabet. But his great system was, a kind of reciprocity treaty between health and sickness, by which a man could commit any species of gluttony he pleased, when he knew the peculiar antagonist principle: and thus he ate—I was going to say like a shark, but let me not in my ignorance calumniate the fish—for I know not of anything that ever swam could eat a soup with a custard-pudding, followed by beef and beet-root, stewed mackerel and treacle, pickled oysters and preserved cherries, roast hare and cucumber, venison, salad, prunes, hashed mutton, omelettes, pastry, and finally, to wind up with effect, a sturgeon baked with brandy, peaches in his abdomen—a thing to make a cook weep and a German blessed. Such was my poor friend, Mr. Bartholomew Cater, the most thin, spare, emaci-

ated, and miserable-looking man that ever sipped at Schwalbach or shivered at Kissingen.

To permit these extravagances in diet, however, he had concocted a code of reprisals, consisting in the various mineral waters of Germany, and the poisonous metals of modern pharmacy, and having established the fact that "bitter wasser" and "Carlsbad," the "Powon" and "Pilnitz," combined with blue pill, were the natural enemies of all things eatable, he swallowed these freely, and then left the matter to the rebellious ingredients, pretty much as the English used to govern Ireland in times gone by, set both parties by the ears and wait the result in peace, well aware that a slight derangement of the balance, from time to time, would keep the contest in motion. Such was the state policy of Mr. Cater, and I can only say that *his* "constitution" survived it, though that of Ireland seems to suffer grievously from the experiment.

This lively gentleman was, then, my companion, indeed, with that cohesive property of your true bore, he was ever beside me, relating some little interesting anecdote of a jaundice or a dropsy, a

tertian or a typhus, by which agreeable souvenirs he preserved the memory of Athens or Naples, Rome or Dresden, fresh and unclouded in his mind. Not satisfied, however, with narration, like all enthusiasts, he would be proselytizing; and whether from the force of *his* arguments or the weakness of *my* nature, found a ready victim in me—insomuch, that under his admirable instruction I was already beginning to feel a dislike and disgust to all things eatable, with an appetite only grown more ravenous; while my reverence for all springs of unsavoury taste and smell—once, I must confess, at a deplorably low ebb—was gradually becoming more developed. It was only by the accidental discovery that my waistcoat could be made to fit, by putting it twice round me, and that my coat was a dependency, of which I was scarcely the nucleus, that I really became frightened.

What! thought I, can this be that Arthur O'Leary whom men jested on his rotundity? Is this me, around whom children ran, as they would about a pillar or a monument, and thought it exercise to circumambulate? Arthur, this will

be the death of thee, thou wert a happy man and a fat, before thou knewest Koch brunnens and thermometers; run while it is yet time, and be thankful at least that thou art in racing condition.

With noiseless step, and cautious gesture, I crept down stairs one morning at day-break. My enemy was still asleep. I heard him muttering as I passed his door; doubtless he was dreaming of some new combination of horrors, some infernal alliance of cucumbers and copaiba. I passed on in silence; my very teeth chattered with fear—happy was I to have them to chatter—another fortnight of his intimacy, and they would have trembled from blue pill as well as panic.

With a heavy sigh I paid my bill, and crossed the street towards the Diligence Office. One place only remained vacant, it was in the banquette. No matter, thought I, anywhere will do at present.

“Where is Monsieur going? for there will be a place vacant in the coupé at ——.”

“I have not thought of that yet,” said I; “but when we reach Vervier we’ll see.”

"Allons, then," said the conducteur, while he whispered to the clerk of the office a few words I could not catch; "You are mistaken, friend," said I, "it's not creditors, they are only chalybeates I'm running from;" and so we started.

A SOLDIER OF THE EMPIRE.

BEFORE I follow out any further my own ramblings, I should like to acquit a debt I owe my reader—if I dare flatter myself that he cares for its discharge—by returning to the story of the poor shepherd of the mountains, and which I cannot more seasonably do than at this place; although the details I am about to relate were furnished to me a great many years after this, and during a visit I paid to Lyons in 1828.

In the Café "de la Coupe d'or," so conspicuous in the Place des "Terreaux," where I usually resorted to pass my evenings, and indulge in the cheap luxuries of my coffee and cheroot, I happened to make a bowing acquaintance with a

venerable elderly gentleman, who each night resorted there to read the papers, and amuse himself by looking over the chess-players, with whom the room was crowded. Some accidental interchange of newspapers led to a recognition, and that again, advanced to a few words each time we met, till one evening, chance placed us at the same table, and we chatted away several hours, and parted in the hope, mutually expressed, of renewing our acquaintance at an early period.

I had no difficulty in interrogating the Dame du Café about my new acquaintance. He was a striking and remarkable-looking personage, tall, and military-looking, with an air of "Grand Seigneur," which in a Frenchman is never deceptive; certainly I never saw it successfully assumed by any who had no right to it. He wore his hair "en queue," and in his dress, evinced in several trifling matters, an adherence to the habits of the old régime—so, at least, I interpreted his lace ruffles and silk stockings, with his broad buckles of brilliants in his shoes--the ribbon of St. Louis, which he wore unostentatiously on his waistcoat, was his only decoration.

"That is the Vicomte de Berlemont, ancien colonel-en-chef," said she, with an accent of pride at the mention of so distinguished a frequenter of the café; "he has not missed an evening here for years past."

A few more words of inquiry elicited from her the information that the Vicomte had served in all the wars of the Empire up to the time of the abdication—that on the restoration of the Bourbons he had received his rank in the service from them, and, faithful to their fortunes, had followed Louis XVIII. in exile to Ghent.

"He has seen a deal of the world then, Madame, it would appear?"

"That he has, and loves to speak about it too; time was when they reckoned the Vicomte the pleasantest person in Lyons; but they say he has grown old now, and contracted a habit of repeating his stories. *Ma foi*, I can't tell how that may be, but I think him always 'aimable.'"
A delightful word that same *aimable* is! and so thinking, I wished Madame good night, and departed. .

The next evening I lay in wait for the old

colonel, and was flattered to see that he was taking equal pains to discover me. We retired to a little table, ordered our coffee, and chatted away till midnight. Such was the commencement,—such the course, of one of the pleasantest intimacies I ever formed.

The Vicomte was unquestionably the most agreeable specimen of his nation I had ever met; easy and unaffected in his manner; he had seen much, and observed shrewdly; not much skilled in book learning, but deeply read in mankind; his views of politics were of that unexaggerated character which are so often found correct; while of his foresight I can give no higher token, than that he then predicted to me the events of the year 1830, only erring as to the time, which he deemed might not be so far distant. The Empire, however, and Napoleon were his favourite topics. Bourbonist as he was, the splendour of France in 1810 and 1811, the greatness of the mighty man whose genius then ruled its destinies, had captivated his imagination, and he would talk for hours over the events of Parisian life at that period, and the more brilliant incidents of the campaigns.

It was in one of our conversations, prolonged beyond the usual time, in discussing the characters of those immediately about the person of the Emperor, that I felt somewhat struck by the remark he made—that while “Napoleon did meet unquestionably many instances of deep ingratitude from those whom he had covered with honours and heaped with favours, still nothing ever equalled the attachment the officers of the army generally bore to his person, and the devotion they felt for his glory and his honour.

“It was not a sentiment, it was a ‘croyance,’ a religious belief among the young men of my day, that the Emperor could do no wrong. What you assume in your country by courtesy, we believed *de facto*. So many times had events, seeming most disastrous, turned out pregnant with advantage and success, that a dilemma was rather a subject of amusing speculation amongst us, than a matter of doubt and despondency.

“There came a terrible reverse to all this, however,” said he, as his voice fell to a lower and sadder key; “a fearful lesson was in store for us. Poor Aubuisson——”

"Aubuisson!" said I, starting, "was that the name you mentioned?"

"Yes," said he, in amazement; "have you heard the story, then?"

"No," said I, "I know of no story; it was the name alone struck me. Was it not one of that name who was mentioned in one of Bonaparte's despatches from Egypt?"

"To be sure it was, and the same man, too; he was the first in the trenches at Alexandria; he carried off a Mameluke chief his prisoner, at the battle of the Pyramids."

"What manner of man was he?"

"A powerful fellow, one of the largest of his regiment, and they were a grenadier battalion; he had black hair and black moustache, which he wore long and drooping in Egyptian fashion."

"The same—the very same!" cried I, carried away by my excitement.

"What do you mean?" said the colonel, "you've never seen him, surely; he died at Charenton the same year Waterloo was fought."

"No such thing," said I, feeling convinced that Lazare was the person. "I saw him alive long

since;" and with that I related the events I have told my reader, detailing minutely every little particular which might serve to confirm my impression of the identity.

"No, no," said the Vicomte, shaking his head, "you are mistaken; Aubuisson was a patient at Charenton for ten years, when he died. The circumstances you mention are certainly both curious and strange; but I cannot think they have any connexion with the fortunes of poor Gustave; at all events, if you like to hear the story, come home with me, and I'll tell it; the café is about to close now, and we must leave."

I gladly accepted the offer; for whatever doubts *he* had concerning Lazare's identity with Aubuisson, *my* convictions were complete, and I longed to hear the solution of a mystery, over which I had pondered many a day of march, and many a sleepless night.

I could scarcely contain my impatience during the little supper, which the Vicomte's hospitality insisted on my partaking of. The thought of Lazare absorbed everything in my mind, and I fancied the old colonel's appetite knew no bounds

when the meal had lasted about a quarter of an hour. At last he finished, and having devised his modest glass of weak wine and water, began the story, of which I present the leading features to my readers, omitting, of course, those little occasional digressions and reflections by which the narrator himself accompanied his tale.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE RETREAT FROM LEIPSIC.

THE third day of the disastrous battle of Leipsic was drawing to a close, as the armies of the coalition made one terrible and fierce attack, in concert, against the Imperial forces. Never was anything before heard like the deafening thunder, as three hundred guns of heavy artillery opened their fire at once, from end to end of the line, and three hundred thousand men advanced, wildly cheering to the attack.

Wearied, worn out, and exhausted, the French army held their ground, like men prepared to die before their Emperor, but never desert him; when the fearful intelligence was brought to Napoleon, that in three days the army had fired ninety-five thousand cannon balls*; that the reserve ammunition was entirely consumed, and but sixteen thousand cannon balls remained, barely sufficient

* Historical.

to maintain the fire two hours longer! What was to be done? No resources lay nearer than Magdeburg or Erfurt. To the latter place the Emperor at once decided on retiring, and at seven o'clock the order was given for the artillery wagons and baggage to pass the defile of Lindenau, and retreat over the Elster; the same order being transmitted to the cavalry, and the other corps of the army. The defile was a long and difficult one, extending for two leagues, and traversing several bridges. To accomplish the retreat in safety, Napoleon was counselled to hold the allies in check by a strong force of artillery, and then set fire to the faubourg; but the conduct of the Saxon troops, however deserving of his anger, could not warrant a punishment so fearful on the Monarch of that country, who, through every change of fortune, had stood steady in his friendship: he rejected the course at once, and determined on retreating as best he might.

The movement was then begun at once, and every avenue that led to the faubourg of Lindenau was crowded by troops of all arms, eagerly pressing onward—a fearful scene of confusion and

dismay; for it was a beaten army who fled, and one which until now never had thoroughly felt the horrors of defeat. From seven until nine the columns came on at a quick step, the cavalry at a trot, defiling along the narrow gorge of Lindenau, they passed a mill at the road side, where, at a window, stood one with arms crossed and head bent upon his bosom. He gazed steadfastly at the long train beneath, but never noticed the salutes of the general officers as they passed along. It was the Emperor himself! pale and careworn, his low chapeau pressed down far on his brows, and his uniform splashed and travel-stained. For above an hour he stood thus silent and motionless; then throwing himself upon a bed he slept. Yes! amid all the terrible events of that disastrous retreat, when the foundations of the mighty empire he had created were crumbling beneath him, when the great army he had so often led to victory was defiling beaten before him, he laid him wearied upon a pillow, and slept!

A terrible cannonade, the fire of seventy large guns, brought to bear upon the ramparts, shook the very earth, and at length awoke him, who

through all the din and clamour, slept soundly and tranquilly.

“What is it, Duroc?” said he, raising himself upon one arm, and looking up.

“It is Swartenzberg’s attack, Sire, on the rampart of Halle.”

“Ha! so near,” said he, springing up and approaching the window, from which the bright flashes of the artillery were each moment discernible in the dark sky. At the same moment an aide-de-camp galloped up, and dismounted at the door: in another minute he was in the room.

The Saxon troops, left by the Emperor as a guard of honour and protection to the unhappy Monarch, had opened a fire on the retreating columns, and a fearful confusion was the result. The Emperor spoke not a word; Macdonald’s corps and Poniatowski’s division were still in Leipsic, but already they had commenced their retiring movement on Lindenau; Lauriston’s brigade was also rapidly approaching the bridge over the Elster; to which now the men were hurrying madly on, intent alone on flight. The bridge—the only one by which the troops could pass, had

been mined, and committed to the charge of Colonel Montfort of the Engineers, with directions to blow it up when the enemy appeared, and thus gain time for the baggage to retreat.

As the aide-de-camp stood, awaiting Napoleon's orders to a few lines written in pencil by the Duke of Tarento, another staff officer arrived, breathless, to say that the allies had carried the rampart, and were already in Leipsic.

Napoleon became deadly pale; then, with a motion of his hand, he signed to the officer to withdraw. "Duroc," said he, when they were alone, "where is Nansouty?"

"With the eighth corps, Sire; they have passed an hour since."

"Who commands the picquet without?"

"Aubuisson, Sire."

"Send him to me, and leave us alone."

In a few moments, the Colonel Aubuisson entered: his arm was in a sling from a sabre wound he had received the morning before, but which would not prevent his remaining on duty. The stout soldier seemed as unconcerned and fearless in that dreadful moment, as though it

were a day of gala manœuvres, and not one of disaster and defeat.

“Aubuisson,” said the Emperor, “you were with us at Alexandria?”

“I was, Sire,” said he, as a deeper tinge coloured his bronzed features.

“The first in the rampart—I remember it well,” said Napoleon: “the *ordre du jour* commemorates the deed. It was at Moscowa you gained the cross, I believe?” continued he, after a slight pause.

“I never obtained it, Sire,” replied Aubuisson, with a struggle to repress some disappointment in his tone.

“How—never obtained it!—you, Aubuisson, an ancient ‘brave’ of the Pyramids. Come, come, there has been a mistake somewhere—we must look to this. Meanwhile, *General* Aubuisson, take mine.”

With that he detached his cordon from the breast of his uniform, and fastened it on the coat of the astonished officer, who could only mutter the words “Sire—Sire!” in reply.

“Now then for a service you must render me,

and speedily too," said Napoleon, as he laid his hand on the General's shoulder.

The Emperor whispered for some seconds in his ear, then looked at him fixedly in the face. "What!" cried he, "do you hesitate?"

"Hesitate! Sire," said Aubuisson, starting back, "Never! If your Majesty had ordered me to the mouth of a mortar—but I wish to know——"

Napoleon did not permit him to conclude, but drawing him closer, whispered again a few words in his ear. "And mark me," said he aloud as he finished, "mark me, Aubuisson—Silence, pas un mot—Silence, à la mort!"

"A la mort, Sire!" repeated the General, while at the same moment Duroc hurried into the room, and cried out,

"They are advancing towards the Elster—Macdonald's rear guard is engaged—"

A motion of Napoleon's hand towards the door, and a look at Aubuisson, was the only notice he took of the intelligence, and the officer was gone.

While Duroc continued to detail the disastrous

events the last arrived news had announced, the Emperor approached the window, which was still open, and looked out. All was in darkness towards that part of the city, near the defile. The attack was on the distant rampart, near which the sky was red and lurid. Still it was towards that dark and gloomy part, Napoleon's eyes were turned, and not in the direction where the fight was still raging. Peering into the dense blackness, he stood without speaking, when suddenly a bright gleam of light shot up from the gloom, and then came three tremendous reports, so rapidly one after the other, as almost to seem like one. The same instant a blaze of fire flashed upwards towards the sky, and glittering fragments of burning timber were hurled into the air. Napoleon covered his eyes with his hand, and leaned against the side of the window.

"It is the bridge ~~over~~ the Elster!" cried Duroc, in a voice half wild with passion. "They've blown up the bridge before Macdonald's division have crossed."

"Impossible!" said the Emperor. "Go see quickly, Duroc, what has happened."

But before the General could leave the room, a wounded officer rushed in, his clothes covered with the marks of recent fire.

“The Sappers, Sire—the Sappers——”

“What of them?” said the Emperor.

“They’ve blown up the bridge, and the fourth corps are still in Leipsic.”

The next moment Napoleon was on his horse, surrounded by his staff, and galloping furiously towards the river.

Never was a scene more awful than that which now presented itself there. Hundreds of men had thrown themselves headlong into the rapid river, where masses of burning timber were falling on every side—horse and foot all mixed up in fearful confusion, struggled madly in the stream, mingling their cries with the shouts of those who came on from behind, and who discovered for the first time that the retreat was cut off. The Duke of Tarento crossed, holding by his horse’s mane. Lauriston had nearly reached the bank, when he sunk to rise no more: and Poniatowski, the chivalrous Pole, the last hope of his nation, was seen for an instant, strug-

gling with the waves, and then disappeared for ever.

Twenty thousand men, sixty great guns, and above two hundred wagons, were thus left in the power of the enemy. Few who sought refuge in flight ever reached the opposite bank, and for miles down, the shores of the Elster were marked by the bodies of French soldiers, who thus met their death on that fearful night.

Among the disasters of this terrible retreat, was the fate of Reynier, of whom no tidings could be had, nor was it known whether he died in battle, or fell a prisoner into the hands of the enemy. He was the personal friend of the Emperor, who in his loss, deplored not only the brave and valorous soldier, but the steady adherent to his fortunes, through good and evil.

No more striking evidence of the amount of this misfortune can be had, than the bulletin of Napoleon himself. That document usually devoted to the expression of vain-glorious and exaggerated descriptions of the triumphs of the army—full of those high-flown narratives, by which the glowing imagination of the Emperor

conveyed the deeds of his soldiers to the wondering ears of France, was now a record of mournful depression, and sad reverse of fortune.

"The French Army" said he, "continues its march on Erfurt—a beaten army; after so many brilliant successes, it is now in retreat."

Every one is already acquainted with the disastrous career of that army, the greatest that ever marched from France. Each step of their return obstinately contested against overwhelming superiority of force, however it might evidence the chivalrous spirit of a nation who would not confess defeat, brought them only nearer to their own frontiers, pursued by those whose countries they had violated, whose kings they had dethroned, whose liberties they had trampled on.

The fearful Nemesis of war had come, the hour was arrived when all the wrongs they had wreaked on others, were to be tenfold inflicted on themselves—when the plains of that "belle France," of which they were so proud, were to be trampled beneath the feet of insulting conquerors—when the Cossack and the Hulan were to bivouac in

that capital which they so arrogantly styled "the centre of European civilization."

I need not dwell on these things, I will but ask you to accompany me to Erfurt, where the army arrived five days after. A court-martial was there summoned for the trial of Colonel Montfort, of the Engineers, and the party under his command, who, in violation of their orders, had prematurely blown up the bridge over the Elster, and were thus the cause of that fearful disaster, by which so many gallant lives were sacrificed, and the honour of a French army so grievously tarnished.

Contrary to the ordinary custom, the proceedings of that court-martial were never made known;* the tribunal sat with closed doors, accessible only to the Emperor himself, and the officers of his personal staff. On the fourth day of the investigation, a messenger was despatched to Braunach, a distant outpost of the army, to bring up General Aubuisson, who it was rumoured, was somehow implicated in the transaction.

The General took his place beside the other

* The Viscomte's assertion is historically correct.

prisoners, in the full uniform of his "grade." He wore on his breast the cross the Emperor himself had given him, and he carried at his side the sabre of honour, he had received on the battlefield of Eylau. Still, they who knew him well, remarked that his countenance no longer wore its frank and easy expression, while in his eye there was a restless, anxious look, as he glanced from side to side, and seemed troubled and suspicious.

An order, brought by one of the Aides-de-camp of the Emperor, commanded that the proceedings should not be opened that morning before his Majesty's arrival, and already the Court had remained an hour inactive, when Napoleon entered suddenly, and saluting the members of the tribunal with a courteous bow, took his place at the head of the table. As he passed up the hall he threw one glance upon the bench where the prisoners sat; it was short and fleeting, but there was one there who felt it in his inmost soul, and who in that rapid look, read his own fate for ever.

"General Aubuisson," said the President of the Court-martial, "you were on duty with the

peloton of your battalion, on the evening of the 18th?"

A short nod of the head was the only reply. "It is alleged," continued the President, "that a little after nine o'clock, you appeared on the bridge over the Elster, and held a conversation with Colonel Montfort, the officer commanding the post, the Court now desires that you will recapitulate the circumstances of that conversation, as well as inform it generally on the reasons of your presenting yourself at a post so remote from that of your duty?"

The General made no reply, but fixed his eyes steadfastly on the face of the Emperor, whose cold glance met his own, impassive and unmoved.

"Have you heard the question of the Court?" said the President, in a louder tone, "or shall I repeat it?"

The prisoner turned upon him a look of vacancy. Like one suddenly awakened from a frightful dream, he appeared struggling to remember something which no effort of his mind could accomplish. He passed his hand across his brow, on which now the big drops of sweat

were standing, and then there broke from him a sigh, so low and plaintive, it was scarcely audible.

“Collect yourself, General,” said the President, in a milder tone, “we wish to hear from your own lips your account of this transaction.”

Aubuisson threw his eyes downwards, and with his hands firmly clasped, seemed to reflect. As he stood thus, his look fell upon the Cross of the Legion, which he wore on his bosom, and with a sudden start he pressed his hand upon it, and drawing himself up to his full height, exclaimed in a wild and broken voice,

“Silence!—silence à la mort!”

The members of the Court-martial looked from one to the other in amazement, while after a pause of a few minutes, the President repeated his question, dwelling patiently on each word, as if desirous to suit the troubled intellect of the prisoner.

“You are asked,” said he, “to remember why you appeared at the bridge of the Elster.”

“Hush!” replied the prisoner, placing his finger upon his lips, as if to instil caution; “not a word!”

"What can this mean?" said the President, "his mind appears completely astray."

The members of the tribunal leaned their heads over the table, and conversed for some moments in a low tone, after which the President resumed the interrogatory as before.

"Que voulez vous?" said the Emperor rising, while a crimson spot on his cheek, evinced his displeasure, "Que voulez vous, Messieurs! do you not see the man is mad?"

"Silence!" reiterated Aubuisson, in the same solemn voice, "à la mort—silence!"

There could no longer be any doubt upon the question. From whatever cause proceeding, his intellects were shaken, and his reason gone. Some predominant impression, some all-powerful idea, had usurped the seat of both judgment and memory, and he was a maniac.

In ten days after, the General Aubuisson—the distinguished soldier of the Republic, the "brave" of Egypt, and the hero of many a battle in Germany, Poland, and Russia—was a patient of Charenton. A sad and melancholy figure, wasted and withered like a tree reft by lightning, the

wreck of his former self, he walked slowly to and fro, and though at times his reason would seem to return free and unclouded, suddenly a dark curtain would appear to drop over the light of his intellect, and he would mutter the words "Silence ! silence à la mort !" and speak not again for several hours after.

The Vicomte de Berlemont, from whom I heard this sad story, was himself a member of the Court-martial on the occasion.

For the rest, I visited Paris about a fortnight after I heard it, and, determining to solve my doubts on a subject of such interest, paid an early visit to Charenton. On examining the registry of the institution, I found the name of "Gustave Guillaume Aubuisson, native of Dijon, aged thirty-two. Admitted at Charenton the 31st of October, 1813—Incurable."

And on another page was the single line,

"Aubuisson escaped from Charenton, June 16th, 1815—supposed to have been seen at Waterloo on the 18th."

One more era remains to be mentioned in this

sad story. The old tower still stands, bleak and desolate on the mountains of the Vesdre; but it is now uninhabited—the sheep seek shelter within its gloomy walls, and herd in that spacious chimney. There is another change too, but so slight as scarcely to be noticed—a little mound of earth, grass-grown and covered with thistles, marks the spot where “Lazare the shepherd” takes his last rest. It is a lone and dreary spot, and the sighing night winds as they move over the barren heath seem to utter his last “consigne,” and his requiem—“Silence! silence à la mort!”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE "BANQUETTE."

"*SUMMA diligentia*," as we used to translate it at school, "on the top of the Diligence," I wagged along towards the Rhine—a weary and a lonely way it is.—Indeed I half believe a frontier is ever thus, a kind of natural barrier to ambition on either side, where both parties stop short and say, Well, there's no temptation there, any how!

Reader, hast ever travelled in the banquette of a Diligence? I will not ask you, fair lady, for how could you ever mount to that Olympus of trunks, carpet-bags, and hat-boxes; but my whiskered friend, with the cheroot yonder, what says he? Never look angry, man, there was no offence in my question; better men than either of us have done it, and no bad plan either.

First, if the weather be fine, the view is a glorious thing; you are not limited like your

friends in the coupé, to the sight of the conducteur's gaiters, or the leather disk of the postilion's "continuations." No.—Your eye ranges away at either side over those undulating plains, which the Continent presents, unbroken by fence or hedge-row; vast corn-fields, great waving woods, interminable tracts of yellowish pasture-land, with here and there a village spire, or the pointed roof of some chateau rising above the trees. A yellow earthy by-road traverses the plain, on which a heavy wagon plods along, the eight huge horses stepping as free as though no weight restrained them; their bells are tinkling in the clear air, and the merry chaunt of the wagoner chimes in pleasantly with them. It is somewhat hard to fancy how the land is ever tilled; you meet few villages—scarcely a house is in sight—yet there are the fragrant fields, the yellow gold of harvest tints the earth, and the industry of man is seen on every side. It is peaceful, it is grand, too, from its very extent, but it is not "homelike." No.—Our own happy land alone possesses that attribute. *It is the country of the hearth and home.* The traveller in France or Germany

catches nò glances as he goes of the rural life of the proprietors of the soil. A pale white Chateau, seemingly uninhabited, stands in some formal lawn, where the hot sun darts down his rays unbroken, and the very fountain seems to hiss with heat. No signs of life are seen about, all is still and calm as though the moon were shedding her yellow lustre over the scene. Oh! how I long for the merry school-boys' laugh, the clatter of the pony's canter, the watch-dog's bark, the squire's self breathing the morning air amid his woods, that tell of England. How I fancy a peep into that large drawing-room, whose windows open to the green-sward, letting in a view of distant mountains, and a far-receding fore-ground, through an atmosphere, heavy with the rose and the honeysuckle. Lovely as is the scene, with foliage tinted in every hue, from the light sprayey hazel to the dull pine or the dark copper beech; how I prefer to look within where *they* are met, who call this "home," and what a Paradise is such a home! but I must think no more of these things. I am a lone and solitary man, my happiness is cast in a different path, nor shall I mar it by longings which

never can be realized. While I sat thus musing, my companion of the Banquette, of whom I had hitherto seen nothing, but a blue cloth cloak and a travelling cap, came slap down on me with a snort that choked him, and aroused me.

“I ask your pardon, sir,” said he, in a voice that betrayed Middlesex most culpably. “Je suis,—that is, J’ai ——”

“Never mind, sir; English will answer every purpose,” cried I. “You have had a sound sleep of it.”

“Yes, heaven be praised. I get over a journey as well as most men. Where are we now—do you happen to know?”

“That old castle yonder I suspect is the Alten Burg,” said I, taking out my guide-book and directory. “The Alten Burg was built in the year 1384, by Carl Ludwig Graf von Lowenstein, and is not without its historic associations——”

“D——n its historic associations,” said my companion, with an energy that made me start. “I wish the devil and his imps had carried away all such trumpery, or kept them to torture people in their own hot climate, and left us free

here. I ask pardon, sir—I beseech you to forgive my warmth; you would, if you knew the cause, I'm certain."

I began to suspect as much myself, and that my neighbour, being insane, was in no wise responsible for his opinions; when he resumed,

"Most men are made miserable by present calamities, some feel apprehensions for the future, but no one ever suffered so much from either as I do from the past. No, sir," continued he, raising his voice, "I have been made unhappy from those sweet souvenirs of departed greatness, guide-book people and tourists gloat over. The very thought of antiquity makes me shudder; the name of Charlemagne gives me the lumbago, and I'd run a mile from a conversation about Charles the Bold, or Philip van Artevelde. I see what's passing in your mind, but you're all wrong—I'm not deranged, not a bit of it—though faith I might be, without any shame or disgrace."

The caprices of men, of Englishmen in particular, had long ceased to surprise me; each day disclosed some new eccentricity or other. In the very last hotel I had left a member of Parliament

planning a new route to the Rhine—avoiding Cologne—because in the coffee-room of the “Grossen Rheinberg” there was a double door, that everybody banged when he went in or out, and so discomposed the honourable and learned gentleman, that he was laid up for three weeks with a fit of gout, brought on by pure passion at the inconvenience.

I had not long to wait for the explanation in this case. My companion appeared to think he owed it to himself to “show cause why” he was not to be accounted a lunatic, and after briefly giving me to understand that his means enabled him to retire from active pursuits and enjoy his ease, he went on to recount that he had come abroad to pass the remainder of his days in peace and tranquillity—but I shall let him tell his own story in his own words.

“On the eighth day after my arrival at Brussels, I told my wife to pack up; for, as Mr. Thysens the lawyer, who promised to write before that time, had not done so, we had nothing to wait for. We had seen Waterloo, visited the Musée, skated about in liston slippers, through the Palais

d'Orange, dined at Dubos's, eat ice at Velloni's, bought half the old lace in the Rue de la Madeleine, and almost caught an ague in the Allée Verte. This was, certainly, pleasure enough for one week; so I ordered my bill, and prepared 'to evacuate Flanders.' Lord help us, what beings we are! Had I gone down to the railroad by the Boulevards, and not by the Montagne de la Cour, what miseries might I not have been spared. Mr. Thysens' clerk met me, just as I emerged from the Place Royale, with a letter in his hand.

“*‘Ah, Monsieur, quel plaisir de vous voir,—voici une lettre pour vous.’*”

“I took it—opened—and read—

“‘Sir,—I have just completed the purchase of the beautiful Chateau of Vanderstradentendonk, with all its gardens, orchards, pheasantries, piscinæ, prairies, and forest rights, which are now your property. Accept my most respectful congratulations upon your acquisition of this magnificent seat of ancient grandeur, rendered doubly precious by its having been once the favourite residence and chateau of the great Vandyk.’”

“Here followed a long encomium upon Rubens

and his school, which I did not half relish, knowing it was charged to me in my account; the whole winding up with a pressing recommendation to hasten down at once to take possession, and enjoy the partridge shooting, then in great abundance.

“My wife was in ecstasy to be The Frow Vanderstradentendonk, with a fish-pond before the door, and twelve gods and goddesses in lead around it. To have a brace of asthmatic peacocks on a terrace, and a dropsical swan on an island, were strong fascinations; not to speak of the straight avenues leading nowhere, and the winds of heaven blowing everywhere. A house with a hundred and thirty windows, and half as many doors, none of which would shut close; a garden, with no fruit but crab-apples; and a nursery, so called, because the play-ground of all the brats for a league round us. No matter, I had resolved to live abroad for a year or two; one place would do just as well as another; at least, I should have quietness; that was something: there was no neighbourhood, no town, no high road, no excuse for travelling acquaint-

ances to drop in, or rambling tourists to bore one with letters of introduction. Thank God! there was neither a battle-field, a cathedral, a picture, nor a great living poet, for ten miles on every side.

“Here, thought I, I shall have that peace Piccadilly cannot give.—Cincinnatus-like, I’ll plant my cabbages, feed my turkeys, let my beard grow, and nurse my rental. Solitude never bored me; I could bear anything but intrusive impertinence; and, so far did I carry this feeling, that, on reading Robinson Crusoe, I laid down the volume in disgust on the introduction of his man Friday.

“It mattered little, therefore, that the *couleur de rose* picture the lawyer had drawn of the chateau, had little existence out of his own florid imagination: the quaint old building, with its worn tapestries and faded furniture, suited the habit of my soul, and I hugged myself often in the pleasant reflection that my London acquaintances would be puzzling their brains for my whereabouts, without the slightest clue to my detection. Now, had I settled in Florence,

Frankfort, or Geneva, what a life I must have led! There is always some dear Mrs. Somebody going to live in your neighbourhood, who begs you'll look out for a house for her: something very eligible; eighteen rooms well furnished, a southern aspect, in the best quarter; a garden indispensable; and all for some forty pounds a year: or some other dear friend who desires you'll find a governess, with more accomplishments than Malibran, and more learning than Porson, with the temper of five angels and a 'vow in heaven' to have no higher salary than a college bed-maker. Then there are the Thompsons passing through, whom you have taken care never to know before; but who fall upon you now, as strangers in a foreign land, and take the 'benefit' of the 'alien act' in dinners at your house during their stay. I stop not to enumerate the crying wants of the more lately arrived resident, all of which are refreshed for your benefit; the recommendations to butlers who don't cheat, to moral music-masters, grave dancing-masters, and doctors who never take fees; every infraction by each of these individuals in his peculiar calling.

being set down as a just cause of complaint against yourself, requiring an animated correspondence in writing, and concluding with an abject apology and a promise to cut the delinquent that day, though you owe him a half-year's bill.

“These are all pleasant—not to speak of the curse of disjointed society, ill assorted, ill conceived, unreasonable pretension, vulgar impertinence, and fawning toadyism on every side, and not one man to be found, to join you in laughing at the whole thing, which would amply repay one, for any endurance.

“No, thought I, I've had enough of this! I'll try my bark in quieter waters, and though it's only a punt, yet I'll hold the sculls myself, and that's something.

“So much for the self-gratulation I indulged in as the old chaise de poste rattled over the heavy pavement, and drew up short at the portico of my future dwelling. My wife was charmed with the procession of villagers who awaited us on the steps, and, although an uglier population never trod their mother earth in wooden slippers,

fancied she could detect several faces of great beauty and much interest in the crowd. I saw nothing but an indiscriminate haze of cotton nightcaps, striped jackets, blouses, black petticoats and *subots*: so, pushing my way through them, I left the bazoon and the Burgomaster, to the united delights of their music and eloquence, and, shutting the hall door, threw myself on a seat, and thanked heaven that my period of peace and tranquillity was at length to begin.

“Peace and tranquillity! What airy visions! Had I selected the post of cad to an omnibus, a steward to a Greenwich steamer, were I a guide to the monument, or a waiter at Long’s, my life had been one of dignified repose, in comparison with my present existence.

“I had not been a week in the ‘Chateau,’ when a travelling Englishman sprained his ankle, within a short distance of the house. As a matter of course he was brought there, and taken every care of for the few days of his stay: he was fed, housed, leeches, and stuped, and, when at length he proceeded upon his journey, was profuse in his acknowledgements for the services rendered

him: and yet, what was the base return of the ungrateful man? . . . I have scarcely temper to record it. During the very moment, when we were most lavish in our attention to him, he was sapping the very peace of his benefactors. He learned, from the Flemish servants of the house, that it had formerly been the favourite residence of Vandyk; that the very furniture then there was unchanged since his time; the bed, the table, the chair he sat on were all preserved. The wretch—am I not warranted in calling him so?—made notes of all this, and, before I had been three weeks in my abode, out came a ‘Walk in Flanders,’ in two volumes, with a whole chapter about me, headed ‘CHATEAU DE VANDYK.’ . . . There we were, myself and my wife, in every window of the Row — Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown, Green, and Blue, had bought us at a price, and paid for us: there we were—we, who courted solitude and retirement, to be read of by every puppy in the west end, and every apprentice in Cheapside. Our hospitality was lauded, as if I kept open house for all comers, with ‘hot chops and brown gravy,’ at a moment’s notice. The

antiquary was bribed to visit me by the fascinations of a spot, 'sacred to the reveries of genius;' the sportsman, by the account of my 'preserves;' the idler, to say he had been there; and the guide-book-maker and historical biographer, to vamp up details for a new edition of 'Belgium as it was,' or 'Vandyk and his Contemporaries.'

"From the hour of the publication of that horrid book, I never enjoyed a moment's peace or ease. The whole tide of my travelling countrymen—and what a flood it is!—came pouring into Ghent. Post horses could not be found sufficient for half the demand; the hotels were crowded; respectable peasants gave up their daily employ, to become guides to the 'Chateau;' and little busts of Vandyk were hawked about the neighbourhood by children of four years old. The great cathedral of Ghent—Van Scamp's pictures—all the historic remains of that ancient city, were at a discount; and they who formerly exhibited them, as a livelihood, were now thrown out of bread. Like the dancing-master who has not gone up to Paris for the last 'pirouette,' or the physician who has not taken up the stethoscope, they were re-

puted old-fashioned and *passé*; and, if they could not describe the 'Chateau de Vandyk,' were voted among the by-gones.

"The impulse once given, there was no stopping; the current was irresistible; the double lock on the gate of the avenue, the bulldog at the hall door, the closed shutters, the cut-away bell rope, announced a firm resolution in the fortress not to surrender; but we were taken by assault, escaladed, and starved out in turns.

"Scarcely was the tea urn on the breakfast table, when they began to pour in; old and young, the halt, the one-eyed, the fat, the thin, the melancholy, the merry, the dissipated, the dyspeptic, the sentimental, the jocose, the blunt, the ceremonious, the courtly, the rude, the critical, and the free and easy: one came forty miles out of his way, and pronounced the whole thing an imposition, and myself a 'humbug;' another insisted upon my getting up at dinner, that he might sit down in my chair, characterised by the confounded guides, as 'le fauteuil de Vandyk;' a third went so far as to propose lying down in our great four-post bed, just to say he had been there, though

my wife was then in it. I speak not of the miserable practice of cutting slices off all the furniture as relics. John Murray took an inventory of the whole contents of the house for a new edition of his Guide-book; and Holman, the blind traveller, *felt* me all over with his hand, as I sat at tea with my wife; and, last of all, a respectable cheesemonger from the Strand, after inspecting the entire building from the attics to the cellar, pressed sixpence into my hand at parting, and said, 'Happy to see you, Mr. Vandyk, if you come into the City!'

"Then the advice and counsel I met with, oral and written, would fill a volume, and did; for I was compelled to keep an album in the hall for the writers' names.

"One suggested that my desecration of the temple of genius would be less disgusting, if I dined in my kitchen, and left the ancient dining-room as the great artist had left it.

"Another hinted that my presence in my own house destroyed all the illusion of its historic associations.

"A third, a young lady—to judge by the writing—proposed my wearing a point beard and lace

ruffles, with trunk hose and a feather in my hat; probably to favour the 'illusion' so urgently mentioned by the last writer, and, perhaps, to indulge visitors like my friend the cheesemonger.

"Many pitied me—well might they!—as one insensible to the associations of the spot; while my very servants, regarding me only as a show part of the establishment, neglected their duties on every side, and betook themselves to ciceronéship, each allocating his peculiar territory to himself, like the people who show the lions and the armour in the Tower.

"No weather was either too hot or too cold, too sultry or too boisterous, no hour too late or too early, no day was sacred. If the family were at prayers, or at dinner, at breakfast, or in bed, it mattered not: they had come many miles to see 'the Chateau,' and see it they would.

"'Alas!' thought I, 'if, as some learned persons suppose, individuals be recognizable in the next world, what a melancholy time of it will be yours, poor Vandyk! If they make all this hubbub about the house you lived in, what will they do about your fleshly tabernacle?'

"As the season advanced, the crowds increased,

and, as autumn began, the conflicting currents to and from the Rhine all met in my bed-room. There took place all the *rendezvous* of Europe. Runaway daughters there first repented in papa's arms, and profligate sons promised amendment for the future. Myself and my wife were passed by unnoticed and disregarded amid this tumult of recognition and salutation. We were emaciated like skeletons: our meals we eat when we could, like soldiers on a retreat; and we slept in our clothes, not knowing at what moment the enemy might be upon us. Locks, bolts, and bars were ineffectual: our resistance only increased curiosity, and our garrison was ever open to bribery.

“It was to no purpose that I broke the windows to let in the north wind and acute rheumatism; to little good did I try an alarm of fire every day about two, when the house was fullest; and I failed signally in terrifying my torturers when I painted the gardener's wife sky-blue, and had her placed in the hall, with a large *abel* over the bed, ‘collapsed cholera.’ Bless your heart! the tourist cares for none of these; and I often think it would have saved English powder and shot to have exported half a dozen of them to the East,

for the siege of Seringapatam. Had they been only told of an old picture, a tea-pot, a hearth brush, or a candlestick that once belonged to Godfrey de Bouillon or Peter the Hermit, they would have stormed it under all the fire of Egypt! Well, it's all over at last: human patience could endure no longer; we escaped by night, got away by stealth to Ghent, took post horses in a feigned name, and fled from the Chateau de Vandyk, as from the plague. Determined no longer to trust to chances, I have built a cottage myself, which has no historic associations further back than six weeks ago; and fearful even of being known as the *ci-devant* possessor of the Chateau, never confess to have been in Ghent in my life, and, if Vandyk be mentioned, ask if he is not the post-master at Tervueren.

“Here, then, I conclude my miseries. I cannot tell what may be the pleasure that awaits the *live* ‘Lion,’ but I envy no man the delights that fall to his lot, who inhabits the den of the *dead* one.”

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

